# Mon Ange de la Mort

By J. Aceyn

# Prologue

#### 

The emergency dial tone never lasts long at all, does it? No matter what country you happen to be in. Still, it grates my nerves. It is fortunate then, (for the operator at least) that I only wait through two rings. I’m not exactly known for being anything less than murderous, when my anxiety is wearing me out like my favorite pair of red bottoms.

"Credo che abbiano sparato a qualcuno nel vicolo dietro casa mia. (Someone has been shot in the alley behind my home.) C'è così tanto sangue che hanno bisogno di cure mediche immediate. (They need medical attention immediately, there is so much blood.)"

The distress in my voice is genuine. I've never made one of these calls with the intention of helping someone. Usually, someone is already dead and I needed to stir up some attention. Emergency response teams make fantastic distractions, when needed.

In this case, the plea for help and the tremor in my tone is not manufactured. More than anything, I hope they make it in time to save her life.

Her life, which is now perched precariously at the edge of a cliff face. All because of a single 9mm bullet at point blank range.

My bullet.

I rattle off an address in flawless Italian and hang up before the questions begin. My every intention was to immediately destroy the sim card before anyone has the chance to track it.

Instead, I stare at my reflection in the dark screen, as my legs carry me in the wrong direction. According to my heart, anyway.

My walk is brisk, but not so much to draw attention. It wouldn't do to have a nosy night owl witness me fleeing the location of a shooting.

I used a suppressor, of course. Regardless, there will be a taped off crime scene, come sunrise. If not sooner. I just hope that there isn't a body lying in the midst of the melee.

*Oh god...Vex. What did I do?*

And what kind of fucked up, twisted existence am I living in? The love of my life is sprawled out in an alleyway somewhere behind me. She's bleeding all over the cobblestone path, from a hole just shy of her heart. A hole I put there.

My own heart is being poured into with cement. It’s getting heavier and heavier. As burdensome as the twin boulders that my feet have become. Like millstones have been grafted onto the marble pillars my legs have transformed into.

*“Keep moving. Don't look back.”* My survival instinct demands.

It takes every ounce of willpower that’s been drilled into my subconscious, to move forward. To increase the distance between me, and the horrible mistake I've just made.

All I want to do is fly back there and perform whatever first aid I can. I just want to be by her side. If only to pull her into my lap and run my fingers through her short curly tresses, while we wait for help to arrive.

Trudging alongside river, my focus is on keeping a serene appearance on the outside. Meanwhile, I'm being thrashed around by the maelstrom of my inner turmoil. I'm so caught up in the destruction, I don't realize what I've done until I hear the dial tone tickling my ear for the second time.

It isn’t necessary to check the number I’ve dialed. I already know I’ve just fucked up in a major way, again. Two insanely stupid decisions in less than 10 minutes.

As Vex would so eloquently put it, "You're on a roll, little angel. 3 strikes and you're out."

The horrible sinking feeling in my stomach is all the confirmation I need. I already know who is about to come over the line. Even though we have never spoken before.

I know and still I am startled, nearly dropping the phone into the chilly current rushing beside me. What catches me off guard is the voice on the other end.

It is exactly like hers. Same inflections. Same stoic indifference seeping through the speaker and flooding my brain with painful reminders. The only difference is the timbre. It holds an endless type of depth that supersedes even Vex's baritone.

Vex has a unique voice for a female- smokey and seductive with an unquestionable authority. Reminiscent of top shelf whiskey and Cuban cigars and just... money.

A sound with a taste that I loved to savor on my tongue. She used to share the expensive flavors with me. Sometimes I would steal them from where they lingered on her lips. Then they would linger on mine. In much the same way her voice now echoes through the empty space inside of me. A space her love used to fill. Sometimes it would be so full it would overflow, drowning every tainted part of me with the warmth of her adoration.

But I’ve felt frigid and hollow for years.

The voice currently assaulting my mental fortitude is too deep to belong to mon amour. Nevertheless, I'm shook when he answers the phone the same way she does.

"This better be worth my time."

I'm reeling from the similarities, stunned into wordlessness. My silence is punctuated by the click clack of my high heeled boots meeting the smooth stone path.

"Who is this? Speak now if you have something to say." His impatience is palpable.

Finally, I gather the courage to speak. I use English, though I have no doubt he's as fluent in my native tongue as his progeny.

My first words are the same address I relayed to emergency services. Followed by, "She's been shot, send someone quickly or she will bleed to death."

I curse my trembling voice, as it betrays the depth of my sorrow. I can’t afford to show weakness to a sworn enemy of the Serpent Clan.

I hear the snapping of fingers, followed by frantic commands in at least 3 different languages. When I hear him say "Evexella," my carefully erected walls begin to crumble and fall.

My tears fall right alongside them.

I should hang up. I've said what I needed to say. I've exhausted my possible resources for saving her, without endangering us both even further. But my hand is frozen against my face. My feet, however, are considerably lighter. I'm able to increase my pace with relative ease.

I should feel more guilty than before, but I don’t. This phone call is a betrayal to my family. I would be seen as the ultimate traitor, regardless of my reputation and talents. I'm unmatched when it comes to killing targets for money. Better than all of them, by far. But I doubt I could take my entire clan on at one time. They would be relentless in their hunt, and I would have nowhere safe to lay my head. They would get to me, eventually. They would take my traitorous actions out of my hide. Quite literally.

I glance around, triple checking my surroundings for eyes and ears.

For the early morning hour, across the river, the city is still alive, in a way. Lights twinkle like nearby stars across the water. On this side, darkness is prevalent. The main sources of light come from lanterns standing solo along the paths. Their flames seem to thrash about in anger as I pass, though I know it's only in my head. Their imaginary restless movement is nothing but a mirror of my disturbed spirit.

The head of the Archer family comes back on the line. My stomach lurches violently at his words.

"Ilyasviel, what happened to my daughter?"

It takes all of my years of grueling training to control the jolt of fear that hits me. I work to steady my voice. "How do you know who I am?"

He chuckles. A hair-raising, short-lived sound that is dark in nature.

"As charming as my daughter is, she doesn't make friends. I can only think of one woman in our circles who would be brave enough to make this call, especially for her sake."

I swallow, louder than intended.

"You're the only one she ever talks about. It wasn't hard to figure out." He ends in a softer tone. It’s just as disconcerting as the chuckle. His ability to transform from evil villain to concerned father in the same breath is intimidating, to say the least.

Suddenly it's too much, and my emotional masquerade is blown into pieces.

"Je lui ai tiré dessus. (I shot her.)" I begin to sob in my natural tongue. I cross the bridge overlooking the watery depths below. I pray the sound of the river will help muffle my own waterworks.

"Je l'aime et je lui ai tiré dessus. Ils allaient la tuer. (I love her, and I shot her. They were going to kill her.)"

It's a struggle to keep my voice down as I admit the painful truth to "The" Henry Archer. Many professionals in our line of work refer to him as “Endgame.” He is the man you send when no one else has succeeded. A perfect kill record. A master hitman.

He's also the one man who would have every reason to murder me for what I've done.

Falling in love with his daughter.

Promising her forever and then turning on her.

Breaking her heart. Then I strung her along for years afterwards. Years in which I couldn't decide if I should kill her and get it over with. On the flip side, I never pulled the trigger on giving in and fucking her brains out.

Teasing, tempting, taunting, threatening. Repressed sexual tension and withheld affection, drawn out into a torturous game of "Love Me or Hate Me." Sapphic Romeo and Juliette edition.

I've been riding the line so hard, fraught with indecision ever since I left her on graduation day. 4 years later and I haven't been able to make myself hurt her. Nor could I give myself to her, body and soul, like I used to. Both grief and betrayal have been eating away my sanity. It's all I've known.

But that all changed tonight. I actually pulled the trigger. Which has landed me, ass first, on the wrong side of the fence. The side which makes me a true enemy of the Archer family.

I read the devastation in Vex's eyes. She couldn’t believe what I had just done to her. The shock of betrayal was broadcasted in the hesitant way she reached out for me. Just before she collapsed to the ground.

Surely now she will hate me. She will believe I've finally made up my mind. And now she’ll have made up hers. If Vex lives, then the gorgeous masc assassin will want to return the favor.

I've essentially declared my own personal war on the Spartan Clan, when I shot their leader's only child; the future head of the family.

Vex's father is quiet, after my confession. Like he's just listening to my heart liquefy and leak from my eyes. Maybe he's enjoying it. Maybe he's plotting my death.

"You shot her...but she's still alive?" Damn his voice! It continues to throw me off-guard. This time, it's not the similarities, but the tentative tone that confuses me.

"Y-yes." I whisper my response into the cell. "I missed all of her vital organs. But she's bleeding badly. I didn't have a choice."

"Explain." His tone demands compliance.

I consider resisting, wondering if it will help or hurt my cause. I briefly scan my surroundings, making up my mind. I impart with Henry the conclusion I had reached in the past ten minutes.

"I think my family used me. I had a target, but when I showed up, Vex was already on the job. One of our contracts must have been falsified. Probably mine, because it was a high profile target. I’m positive now I was sent there to distract her. I interrupted her job, and she dragged me to the alley so our covers didn’t get blown. She and I were just talking and threatening each other like we seem to always do. I waved a gun in her face, she pulled a knife on me, pretty standard for us you know? We could take each other out at any time but instead we-"

"I'm well aware of my daughter's inability to put a permanent end to your foolish rivalry."

"Oui...we just...but then I... I saw sights on her..." My heart gallops in my throat at the memory.

In that moment, I relive the disconcerting way my stomach had bottomed out. The way my heart had ceased its beating altogether. Time seemed to slow to a sluggish crawl, as my brain rapidly tried to make sense of the red dot. It had appeared from nowhere, slowly settling in the center of Vex's forehead.

"And you made a split decision." Henry Archer finishes for me, his words slow and precise.

"Oui." I whisper solemnly, realizing I'm nearly to my evac location. I clean off my face with my sleeve. As I was speaking, I focused on regulating my breathing and schooling my expression to a guarded neutrality. Within the 60 seconds of elapsed time, I've regained total control of myself.

It's as if my emotional breakdown never occurred. No outward signs of weakness remain, except the red flush of my cheeks. I'll blame the cold bite of the wind and the chilly morning air.

If anyone in my family knew of my true feelings for Evexella...I would be in a worse off position than she is now. None of the killers-for-hire that I'm blood bonded to would give me the same consideration that I had just given her.

"It was me or them." I whisper, walking along the opposite side of the river now.

"I see." A pause filled with heavy silence.

"Will you kill me now, Endgame? Will you fulfill your threat now that I've hurt her?"

"I am not sure what threat you speak of, but I believe myself a fair and reasonable man. Putting a bullet into my daughter is as good as forfeiting your life. However, if Vex survives, you will not be pursued.

"You contacted me, undoubtedly against your better judgement. For that I am grateful. It is obvious that you have love for Evexella, regardless of your actions. I tend to leave the affairs of my daughters heart up to my daughter, Miss Cadieux."

"Please don't call me that."

"Would you prefer 'L'ange de la Mort'?"

*No, because she's not dead. Not yet. There’s still time.*

Only other contract killers, family members, and the evening news dare refer to me as "The Angel of Death." Even then, it's only used when referring to one of my many victims. Victims which are nothing more than a cold corpse, by that time.

This is the first time I've walked away from someone who still has breath in their lungs, and warmth in their bones. But I couldn't seem to bring myself to play angel of death to someone I still love.

A vivid image of my perfect counterpart floats dreamily to the forefront of my mind. A time when the devilishly handsome Archer heir smirked at my ethereal new title. When she told me how well it suited my angelic looks and dangerous capabilities.

"It doesn't matter. This will be the last time we talk. Please, please just take care of her. And forget we ever had this conversation." I demand with finality.

"For your courage, and for your mother's sake, I will do as you ask."

I nearly stumble to a dead stop on the empty street.

*"What did you just say to me?"*

### *10 minutes later*

After destroying my phone and tossing it in the Sienne, I branched off from the riverside. A block or two down, I round a corner, and see the non-descript silver vehicle waiting for me in the distance.

Climbing in as if it were just another day, I managed to contain my shock at seeing my father waiting for me. He occupies the seat in the back, furthest from my point of entry. I’m unhappy at seeing his small dark eyes watching me from beneath his stupid fedora with it’s equally stupid and alarmingly atrocious feather perched on it’s rim.

"I'm proud of you daughter. This has been a long time coming." He says in French, a wide grin stretching across his worn features.

He kisses both cheeks, and I strive not to squirm at the contact. My smile is thin, and my eyes deaden as I sink into the facade I've practiced since my childhood.

"Merci, pére. (Thank you, father.)"

"Now that it is finished, and the Archer heir is dead, our family name will be restored to its former greatness. No more scrounging for contracts. No more second-rate jobs. We've been wasting our talents and time for chump change because of the disgrace they subjected us to. But..." He claps his hands together, rubbing them like the money-hungry pig he is. "...it's all behind us now. Financial freedom and the respect we deserve are imminent, my dear."

At my dispassionate gaze he adds, "And, of course your mother's death has been avenged. A life for a life, no?"

Justice and revenge for my mother. The entire reason I consented to join the feud between the Serpent and Spartan Clans. Yet, my father speaks of her murder as an afterthought.

"Oui, papa. An eye for an eye." I respond in English, with carefully constructed neutrality.

My father continues speaking, though it is mostly to himself. I realize, even while trying to tune the man out, that he’s simply saying the same words repeatedly, but with the order rearranged. His excitement is palpable, tangible to the point of touching. However, it is not, by any means, contagious.

I turn and gaze out of the tinted black window as we travel. Creeping languidly through a town still lethargic with sleep. The boisterous Italian residents are only just waking up. Specifically the bakers and caffé owners, whose peak traffic hour is just around the corner.

We pass by Tazza D'Oro, a quaint little hole in the wall. It's one of the only establishments with all of its lights already on. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee is powerful enough to come through our air vents.

I crack the window. Just enough to let the mouthwatering scent envelop me. The bliss of the moment turns sour, as the scent also undams the mental barrier that kept some of my more painful memories at bay. Memories of my mother, who used to rave over their brew. She often claimed Dimitri (the owner of Tazza D’Oro) to be an artist among his peers, as well as a personal friend.

"*It is hands down, ze most exquisite beverage in ze world. Dimitri’s coffee, in ze right hands, could likely end wars. Maybe even cure ze cancer!"* Maman always punctuated the high praises with a double chef's kiss, like it could be said no other way.

Often, she would lean into me after singing Dimitri’s praises and whisper further possibilities in my ear, usually to save my father’s feelings. *“I think if your papá ever tried a cup, perhaps it could even remedy his intolerable fashion sense.. Maybe we shall pour some into his mouth while he snores, and pray the fedora spontaneously combusts, oui?”*

Oh, ma Maman. I miss her with an ardent passion that continues to grow each and every day. She was the only normal one in a family of greedy, selfish contract killers. A family who only knows how to play dirty and does anything for the tiniest shred of glory. Or coin.

My mother should never have ended up in the nest of vipers that is my father’s people. She was traded off like property.in order to resolve her own father’s mounting debts. Set up in an arranged marriage to my father, and forced to bear heirs.

I was the first child for each of my parents. Since I could walk, my father, uncles, and cousins started training me on the art of taking a life. But my Maman bestowed me with everything good inside of me. She imbued me with compassion, and dreams of a brighter future. A future filled with love, and no more death than you might experience as an average, everyday citizen of this world.

I won't deny I have grown to like some of the darker aspects of what I do, and of my nature. I especially enjoy the pain that is involved. Evexella brought that side of me out. Helped me develop it in late-night explorations. She showed me what it meant to trust in someone, and how to accept who I was to my somewhat rotten core. Evexella helped shape me into the woman I am today.

I am cold enough to be able to kill a man one minute, and sleep soundly the next. But I absolutely despise my family's way of doing things. I hate the expectations of this life which was thrust upon me.

On the day of my elite training graduation ceremony, Vex and I had plans to ditch it all.

Coincidentally, my father came at ceremony’s end bearing news. News which was just devastating enough to sway me back into his clutches.

If he had told me that any of my other relatives had been captured and killed by the Spartan Archers, I wouldn't have batted an eye.

But my mother...

*"Come home Ilya. We need you.” My father said when he approached me that day. He looked disheveled, exhausted, and worn down to dust. “The Archers. They…they killed your mother. They took her from us. And when they returned her body, it came with a message for all of us both. And another message, just for you. They have to pay, daughter. We must retaliate, immediately!”*

The message came to me in the form of a picture, texted to my phone. My mother's body, so desecrated and disfigured, I could barely recognize her.

And in the midst of what little remained of her, was a note. Pinned to her chest with a throwing knife. The colors, symbols, and make of a knife that I knew sickeningly well. One just like Vex’s set, covered in Maman’s blood.

The note read:

***Low born scum should learn their place. Keep your slithering worms away from Spartan territory. This is your first and last warning. Spartans hunt Snakes for sport.***

Another note, shoved in my mother’s mouth, which hung open from a very broken jaw:

***For the Serpent Queen: The Spartan Heiress has no desire to continue playing with her pet snake. Slither along now, and don’t return.***

I don’t know if I ever believed the note that was meant for me. I couldn’t wrap my head around Evexella having anything to do with this.

It was either the grief of losing my mother, or the fact that she was killed in such a horrible way to dissuade my plans with Vex. One of those ended up being the true reason I left. I turned from the future I had been mapping out for years, with the woman I'd fallen in love with. I walked away from her without so much as a goodbye. Angry, bitter, devastated, and completely hollow, save for my vengeful fury.

I glance down at my hands where they lay in my lap. At one point of my musings I started wringing them so tightly that I have to rub the circulation back in them.

The weight of my twin pistols, on each thigh, usually brings me a modicum of comfort in times like these. When I’m screaming on the inside but forced to play it cool for appearances sake.

Création feels cold and familiar where she has remained in my left hip holster all night. But Guerre, is the complete opposite, truly making itself known. I practically feel him branding his treachery into my right side, as if he's still warm from expelling its last bullet.

And the greedy pig sitting next to me, manipulated me into using Guerre. Into shooting her.

I let myself be played by my own father tonight. And it’s not the first time.

I always knew Papa had his vices, some irredeemable qualities that I fought to ignore. But I had believed that he cared for me, loved me in his own way. I thought he loved my mother. I believed her passing had been as hard as him as it was me, because that's the front he put on. He was the grieving husband, the widowed father with a true reason for revenge. The head of the tragedy-struck Cadieux Clan, who needed his exceptional daughter to help find justice for his lost love.

Turns out, he's just the psychopath that had her killed. Maybe even killed her himself.

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#### 20 minutes earlier

*"What did you just say to me*?" I snarl over the line at Vex’s father.

Henry Archer dares to speak of my mother? After what he did, or at the very least, had done to her!

"I suppose I should provide my condolences now, since I never had the chance when your mother-"

"Was brutally murdered?!" I finish for him in a tone that would be considered a shriek if I wasn't keeping my volume down.

A silent beat passes and I try to catch my breath.

"Your mother was a good woman, Ilyasviel. She didn't deserve to die like that."

"Then why, Archer? Why did you do it?"

"I... didn't." His words come out the complete opposite of the mayhem in my spirit. Slow. Controlled. Concise.

"Fine." I spit. "You didn't. But you are just as fucked up if you let your people do that to my mother, who was completely innocent in all of this. All she did was be forced into an unhappy marriage with a man she didn’t love!”

“I know…” Henry says quietly.

I’m only getting started though.

“And *you* brought her into a ridiculous feud by desecrating her body. That was the messiest, most grizzly murder I've ever seen. And you did it all so you could keep your progeny under your thumb? So, she didn't sully your reputation by being with a Cadieux? My family may play dirty but that was the lowest, most grimy power move anyone has ever pulled.

"So please, don't kid yourself. You are just as fucking sick as the men who killed her, Henry Archer. Even if you didn't have to get your hands dirty with her blood."

"Miss Cadieux." He echoes a tactic used by my former lover. A soothing tone she would adopt whenever I've worked myself into a frenzy.

I hate that it's so effective on me at this most inopportune time.

It pulls the reins on my fury, renders me panting and without necessary words.

"I-I told you not to call me that." I finally get out.

"Ilyasviel, then. I'm only going to say this once, so hear me now." His tone brooks no argument.

How dare he try to exert any authority over me right now. Damn his stupid voice! Why does he have to sound so much like her?

Before I can retort, he drops a bomb, leveling me in one fell swoop. Endgame just doing what he does best, I suppose.

"Ilyasviel, I loved your mother, once. I would have never let a single hair on her head to be blown out of it’s proper place, if it were up to me."

## Part 1- Vexation

“Pleasure and pain are never far apart.” -Susan Block

### **1 year later: Present Day**

******

The icy barrel of Ilya's custom semi-automatic tastes the same as it always has. My mouth is a smidge busy at this moment, but I'm dying to ask her opinion.

I imagine she would agree with me. Surely, the chilled steel of the knife I have pressed against her throat, feels as familiar as her gun tastes.

“Some things never change.” She murmurs, confirming my silent theory.

I never did figure out how she does that. Had my former classmate-turned-lover, learned to read me so well? Is four years of sharing a dorm all that it takes to read my mind like the daily paper?

Or maybe she isn't reading it at all. Perhaps she’s genuinely thinking the same thing I am, at the same time.

That’s probably it. We’ve been sharing the same wavelength since we started sharing a bed. 98% of the time, anyway.

There was only two instances when we weren't on the same page. 2 percent doesn't seem very significant, when compared to the other 98.

And yet, she managed to ruin my life with *two fucking percent.*

I stare down at the personification of my broken heart. She seems a touch winded from me choke-slamming her onto the shingles of this roof. I may have knocked the breath from her momentarily, but at least she’ll get to draw another in the near future.

She's lucky, really.

I had sensed a presence behind me for a solid minute, unsure who had managed to track my location. It could have been someone holding my contract. It could have been my father for all I knew.

Friend or foe?

Regardless, I found the intruder’s interruption to be quite rude. Inconsiderate, even.

It is my anniversary, after all. And I was busy celebrating, the only way I knew how.

Tsk.

How dare they distract me from my drunken lamentation of lost love.

After taking a last swig from my bottle, I decided to neutralize the interloper. If they were family, my attack would serve as a warning, and they would know how to defend against it. If they were foe, they’d end up a human shish kabob.

I was milliseconds away from letting my knife fly, when I recognized her.

And may I just say…she looked as surprised as I felt.

I’m sure I looked equally as disturbed, honestly. No chance of playing it cool when I had been ingesting insane amounts of liquor. The alcohol had eroded the majority of my emotional control.

Which was evident the moment she tried to flee. Because I tackled her, pinned her face-up beneath me, and pulled my blade to keep her in place.

That’s also the exact same time she un-holstered one of her beloved twin pistols, and spoon fed it to me.

Now I’m gazing down the barrel of Creatíon, which is still parked between my lips. It’s gold plating gleams beneath the moonlight. The vicious serpent winding along the barrel is no less sinister than the last time I saw it.

Past Creatíon, my eyes land on Ilya’s smooth, slender neck. Rubies begin to appear along the velvety soft skin. They swell up in dazzling dew drops from the tiny incision made by the tip of my kunai.

"Vex," she whispers. Her French accent is strong and apparent, even when speaking a name with only three letters.

I don't say anything in response because it's not easy speaking through a loaded firearm, as you can imagine. I only meet her eyes, and try to convey everything I'm feeling through them.

“*Mon ange*”. The words roll through my mind in earnest. She’s so beautiful it pains me to be this close to her again. “*Ilya, my angel.*”

She wearily searches my face. Long, stretched out seconds pass us by. Then…

“I can't.” She concedes, voice breaking.

I watch as her index finger glides over to the gun’s safety mechanism, and engages it.

With one more long look into my soul, she retracts the barrel from my mouth and slides her weapon back into the holster wrapped around her upper thigh.

I close my parched mouth, then lick my lips.

The gun's presence served to stiﬂe the memories of my previous encounter with her. With it gone, fury rises in me like a phoenix from its ashes.

“You can’t? You can’t?” I nearly scream in her magnificent face.

Ilya’s silence is a clear admission to her guilty conscience. It further fuels my rage.

“All of this time, Ilyasviel! I’ve stayed my hand for the past 5 years. Even though you left me hanging after our graduation. Did you know I waited there 3 days straight for you? Because I couldn’t comprehend the idea that you would actually leave me without a word said. What we have is real, Ilya. It’s us, baby. There is nothing that could survive us.

“Do you have any clue how blindsided I was? Fucks sake, you may as well have ripped my beating heart from my chest and unloaded a clip into it!”

I bite down on my bottom lip to cease the outpour of words. Instead, I apply more pressure to the blade, digging the tip into her supple ﬂesh even deeper.

I’m sickened by the desperation underlying my next words. “I believed us to be under an unspoken agreement throughout these long, empty years. It's obvious we can’t kill each other, but there’s a reason we never drew blood, Ilya. Is there not?”

The anguished angel lies helpless beneath me. I see the subtle flex in her features when she grits her teeth.

“Oui.”

“Say it.”

Gleaming hazel eyes dart to the side, but they don't stay there long. They jump back, as does the rest of her when I yell, “Say it!”

My raised voice seems to bounce along the top of each Italian abode surrounding us.

Ilya’s eyes have a darker hue when they return to mine.

“Nous saignons, nous baisons.” She finally consents.

“Precisely right. ‘We bleed, we fuck.’ That's always been our truth. That is who we are, sweetheart. Who we were, anyway. For 8 whole years. Until last year, here in this very spot. You decided to put a bullet into me. You drained my blood all over those stones down there, and you didn't even have the decency to get me off.”

A rueful chuckle punctuates my sarcasm. It helps mask the magnitude of sadness still resonating within.

I begin to caress her with my weapon as I speak. The knife glides up the column of her throat, along her jawbone, to her delicately pointed chin. I trace her plump lips, even scrape a little of the clear gloss. It smudges the edge of the steel.

“You know, I thought I had survived it all during our training. The countless times we’ve been water-boarded, starved, slow sliced, stuck in solitary confinement…I know you remember those days. They prepared us for any type of physical, emotional and psychological pain. But none of it prepared me for you, Ilyasviel.

“You see, I’ve come to realize what true torture is. It’s this ridiculous game we've been playing for the last 4 years. And for the second time since I’ve known you, you disappeared on me. Both times I wished with everything in me that you would have just accepted my fucking contract. Killed me, collected your bounty and moved on.”

Any hitman worth their salt has a contract out there with their face pinned to the file. Someone always wants us dead. The better you are, the more you are worth. Though, very few want to risk killing a killer who can kill you faster than you can kill yourself.

With that last confession, I breach the silky smooth membrane that protects Ilya’s insides from the night air.

Blood spills around the diamond-encrusted edge, and she actually whimpers beneath me.

That whimper stills my hand. The swirling chaos of anger that has been terrorizing my insides, ceases.

That’s all it takes. One vulnerable noise from Ilya and my inner rage monster halts in its very large tracks.

“Why am I still alive, Ilya?” I’m so quiet, it’s as if I’m asking myself.

There’s no reason I should be, other than the fact that Ilya wanted it that way. She shot above my heart and to the right, on purpose. No one had to tell me of Ilya’s conscious choice to spare me. The Angel of Death doesn’t miss.

Ilya responds, short and sweet. Likely because the bobbing of her throat causes more blood to drip down my blade.

“You know why.”

I nearly groan in frustration. Her response both confirms everything I already knew, and provides me with no true answers at the same time.

“Why are you here now? Do you wish to put another round into me?” I’m beyond exasperation at this point.

At her silence, I decide to skip that question. There is one weighing more heavily on my mind. One she can’t or won’t answer, but I put it out there anyway.

“Must I suffer endlessly, Ilya? When I’ve done nothing but love you with everything I’m made of?”

“I…I didn’t know you would be here, Vex.”

That answer deserves another rueful chuckle. “Right. Well then, maybe this is the universe presenting you to me. Giving me a chance to even the score.”

“Do it.” She grits out, grabbing my wrist and forcing the blade further into her skin. “I deserve it, no?”

My head cocks to the side while I study the desperation all over her countenance. Then I begin to push the knife against her, cutting a clean line across an unblemished section of her throat.

It's truly beautiful, the life essence of an angel. Especially when it’s pouring down the flat of my blade. Eclipsing the deadly steel. Covering up my reflection within it.

It's all nothing compared to Ilya, though. She is an enchantment upon my senses. A blessed curse upon my heart.

Her resolve is as cold and hard as my finest blade. Her gaze is steel and her soft jaw is set in a firm line.

The sharp edge of my kunai tastes her flesh. It feeds on her like a vampire, hungry for more. Yet, she shows not a hint of pain in her expression. None that is strictly physical, anyway.

“Are you asking me for penance, little angel?”

Her eyes heat at my words. Almost like I turned up the flame on a gas stove.

The question is familiar. It’s a reminder of how we used to spend our midnight hours together. In our final year of elite training, those words turned out to be a wildly effective pick-up line on the girl below me.

Seniors at CKU, after passing all prelims, would be assigned low-level contracts. An instructor would accompany the student, evaluating their planning, their execution, and their clean-up. The targets always started out of minor importance.

Say a small gang starts gaining too much traction. The leader and their chain of command would be added to the senior hit list. A serial killer has started racking up a body count but the police can’t stop them? Senior hit list. Those contracts gleaned more points, because you had to discover their identity and track them down. End of the year points tallied up to help to determine our class’s version of a “Valedictorian.”

The point is, low life scum were target practice. Ilya and I tore through the list when they gave us permission. They stopped sending instructors with each of us early on. Sometimes we would kill more than one in a single night, competing against each other in good sport.

Every time she stole a life, Ilya would come back to the dorm with blood on her hands, and repentance in her heart.

Ilya’s family, the Cadieux Serpent Clan, are…wait for it…

Catholics.

Catholic contract killers. I shake my head every time I think about the absurdity of the way they live.

Growing up a Cadieux, my love was under the impression that confession was a necessity. Believe it or not, CKU does not employ priests round-the-clock to absolve it’s trainees. Much less hand out Hail Mary’s like parade candy.

I, however, relished the idea of having Ilyasviel on her knees. The idea of having her beg me for absolution was much too tempting for a Demistud on a power trip. And that’s exactly what I was, back then.

So, I offered to be her confessional, of sorts. She would kneel and pray to me fervently. Worship me with that divine tongue. Then I would use my fingers, tongue, or a sizeable silicon cock to help drive those pesky sins out of her. I had her screaming Hail Mary’s at the top of her lungs.

Penance, indeed.

I can practically see those memories roll through her eyes. They melt the icy determination had fortified herself with.

I can't help myself anymore. My spot between her legs is perfect. I'm overcome by my darker desires, and I grind into her with a near-violent roll of my hips.

I really should be doing the opposite. I mean, I have her pinned on this rooftop, overlooking the same alley that she painted with my blood a year prior. I should be returning the favor. She loaned me a bullet. I should loan her my blade.

But everything I am recognizes the lithe body beneath mine. Pressing against her feels like coming home. Right here, between her thighs, is the only place I’ve ever truly belonged.

At my insistent hip movement, Ilya’s breath hitches in her throat. Her body stiffens.

I understand the reserve all too well. I’m still in the midst of threatening her life.

“Are you?” A small voice in the back of my mind whispers. “Could you really take her life?”

I try to tell myself yes, that if I had to I could. It’s what she would do. But my inner voice proceeds to bust me out again.

“Please. You would slay nations for this girl. You would unload clip after clip into your own chest to save her.”

I might not want to admit it, but it doesn’t make the thought any less true.

Silently calling myself out has caused me to freeze up, but Ilya draws me back out of my head.

Her body relaxes. Long, powerful legs wrap around me like they have done countless times. I swear my hips were sculpted with the perfect grooves for her inner thighs.

“If I want to pay my penance...ça va faire mal, bébé? (…will you make it hurt, baby?)” She asks me with an innocence that contradicts her words.

A lit coal burns low in my belly. A less vindictive fire blazes to life and circulates through my entire system. I grind into her again. The knife digs deeper into her ﬂesh as I do. The resulting sound from each of us makes me vibrate with anticipation.

"Damn you, Ilya!" I growl, raising my blade in the air above her.

I stare into her eyes and consider following through and taking revenge. Getting my payback for the innumerable times she’s inflicted pain. The type of pain I never figured out how to heal from. Not without her there to soothe the wounds.

I scream out the frustration of the past 5 years. Desolate, cold, pointless years. The kunai arcs downwards with penetrating force.

I end up burying it in the rooftop, centimeters from her head.

Before I've even released the handle, both of her delicate hands have wrapped around my throat. The deadly heiress applies pressure with unexpected force, like she means to extricate the air from my lungs.

Extra dangerous nails dig deeply where they meet at my nape. Piercing the skin with their sharp points. I groan with the familiarity of it. I drip down my thighs with this particular pain.

Ilya’s eyes ﬂash with anticipation. Right before the darkness tries to keep me in it’s clutches, she pulls me down to meet her lips.

The kiss is chaotic, animalistic. We tear at each other with our teeth, drawing blood. We attempt to strangle each other with our tongues down each others’ throats.

Her hands slide lower on my back and grip the bottom of my shirt. One solid yank and she’s removed it from its place tucked into my slacks. Without hesitation or permission, she reaches between us and unbuttons my pants. Ilya forces them past my hips until they catch right below the curve of my cheeks.

When Ilya’s trigger ﬁnger slips through my wetness, she's the opposite of gentle. Not that I needed or wanted it like that. What matters is her demonstrating plenty of well-versed skill.

She knows my body.

All of my weaknesses, and peculiar reservations when it comes to fucking. She knows them like she wrote them for me. And I realize- as she slips two fingers inside of me and drives deep- that she knows how to tear through those reservations like they never existed.

I moan deeply into her mouth as she works them in and out of me in an infuriating and perfect rhythm.

My abs tighten up, my core clenches around her. She has me on a fast path to seeing stars like a NASA rocket launch.

My hand moves without any conscious command. It slips beneath her tight, black tank top. Determined to explore the soft skin of her toned abdomen for a precious few seconds. I push at the material, revealing ivory skin with a few light and dark scars spread across her torso.

When I have it up above her generous handfuls of tits, I get to work on her nipples. They pebble up when exposed to the brisk night air. I pluck at them and toy with their sensitivity. I am rewarded with sweet whimpers and gasps that make me contract around her fingers in a vice grip.

I let her have her fun between my legs, reveling in the way she slips out of me to use those two digits to jerk my clit.

Her mouth breaks from mine and she scrapes her perfect white incisors along my jawbone. Heavily accented English brushes against my skin. Goosebumps rise from my neck to the ﬂesh of my ass cheeks, as the breeze whips them both.

"You're so close, mon amour. I miss the feeling of you drenching my ﬁngers. Will you come for me again, Vexy? Just like you used to?" IIya purrs.

I have to plant both hands on either side of her body as she works me to the point of breaking. My body stiffens. I cry out and do exactly as she asks, soaking her to her wrist in my cum.

"Mon ange." I groan out, dropping my forehead to hers and closing my eyes tightly. The waves crash hard, sending my body through one quake after another until she's slowed her ministrations to a stop.

I open my eyes, centimeters away from hers, to ﬁnd them shining with contentment. Her lip is held tightly between her teeth, observing my pleasure from her close vantage point.

"Don't look so proud of yourself, magniﬁque diable (gorgeous devil). It's my turn." I growl at her, seamlessly slipping into French from proper English.

Her smile only grows larger as I reach behind me and pull out my Tri-dagger. The twisted blade is a solid 9 inches and hands down my favorite for up-close combat. Best of all, it’s as deadly as a shotgun ﬁred at point blank range, when I'm this close to my target.

I lean back, and force her legs further apart, giving me room to work with. The dark, spandex tights she’s wearing pull taut in the perfect spot. When I swing the tip of the dagger in that area, her eyes grow wide. She barely holds back a ﬂinch as the blade slices through the thin material.

The old Ilya would never have flinched. She used to trust me and my intentions implicitly. The Ilya beneath me now, fears my wrath.

“Are you afraid of me, Death Angel?”

Hesitantly, she replies, “If not for you, Reaper, I would still be oblivious to the sour taste of fear.”

This causes me to pause. My head tilts while I search her for falsehood. “You are scared of me, mon amour? Truly?”

She averts her eyes, and seals her lips tight.

I ask her again, my tone softer this time. I also cut out the air of condescension that had tainted it previously.

Her hazel eyes meet mine. They swirl with more of the emerald color than the earth it’s mined from. The reluctant answer that I'm met with, tries it’s damndest to shake my foundation.

“No. I've only ever been afraid of…of losing you. Permanently.”

A long, unstable breath is forced out through my nostrils. My tongue ring taps against my top teeth while I take a moment to reorient myself.

My love’s admission feels genuine. But, so much has changed about Ilya in the past half decade. I’m no longer confident in my ability to play human lie detector with Ilyasviel, like I once was.

I decide not to address her words, for fear of falling down a rabbit hole. Instead, I break off our eye contact, dropping my gaze and taking in her prone figure. My eyes alight on what I've uncovered with my little knife trick to her knickers. In an instant, the controlled, cocky version of myself snaps back into place.

"No panties. Tsk. Naughty." I reprimand, dipping my fingers into her revealed treasure. With a hunger that eclipses everything else, I bring my ﬁngers back up to my lips.

“Mmm. Fuck yes.” Groaning with satisfaction, I withdraw both digits from my mouth.

The dewy shine upon them is made up of my own saliva. I made sure to suck every drop of her arousal off. I wouldn’t dare be wasteful, when the flavor between her legs is akin to my favorite brew. I liken her nectar to the fountain of youth.

"You always taste like mine," I share with her, tone heavy with reverence.

The act of tasting her is as holy to me as worshipping at the altar of some deity. Yet, I persist in using terrible manners. I simply can’t stop myself from double dipping. This time I paint my lips with her essence, applying it like a go-to shade of lipstick.

"No matter how many times you try saying otherwise. No matter how many times you try hurting me. You will always taste like this, Ilya. Do you know why that is, mon ange?"

"Vex," she whimpers.

Her hips come up off the roof’s shingles in their instinctive search for attention. I spin the knife in my grasp for a few rotations, until the sturdy handle is clasped between my ﬁngers. The blade rests just against my forearm, where it can't slice into me too severely.

The handle is ribbed, with deep inset ridges and rounded perfectly for my purposes. I place the rounded tip of the handle against her glistening lower lips, which stills her movement entirely. Her body is rigid with anticipation, and her tongue snakes over her lips as she waits for my next move.

"Tell me why that is, Ilya, and I'll plunge my knife so deep in this needy pussy, you'll beg me to let you keep it. Encore une fois. (Again.)"

I tease her with the handle slipping it along her growing wetness until her nails are digging into the pitted roof's texture. She begins mewling as if she may perish from desperation. However, mewling is not the answer I'm waiting to hear from her. And I'm not known for my patience.

"Ilyasviel..." I say in warning, while retracting the knife's blunt end from between her legs.

"Vex!" she yells, reaching for my wrist with lightning-fast reﬂexes.

We stare at each other. Ilya's grasp on my wrist is tight and desperate. Tight and desperate, like the pearlescent gates of heaven my weapon is ready to breach.

"Parce que je suis à toi, Vex." (Because I'm yours, Vex.)

"That's right, Ilyasviel Cadieux. Because “You” belong to

“Me”. “Not them.” They can tell you where to go and who to kill, but they can never own you, like I do."

I lean down into her ear, even as I begin to slowly slide the knife handle into her deliciously resistant cunt.

"Because it's my name carved into your skin, Ilya. You have always been my property, my toy to wreak havoc with. You are my “dangereuse petite poupée” (dangerous little doll) with the face of an angel."

"Vex, stop fucking teasing me. Joue avec moi, s'il te plait ,(play with me, please)," she begs, sharp nails piercing the skin of my wrist as she forces me to drive further into her.

She truly is so tight it makes me ache with longing, knowing that she's not been giving what’s mine to anyone else. Due to her preference for thick penetration, even some regular use of a dildo or other toys would have been obvious. But no, she's saved herself for me, it seems. Just like I haven't had eyes for anyone but her since we were forcefully ripped from each other's lives.

We were set against each other from the days we were born. Forced to be rivals for the sake of family reputations and unseemly amounts of money. We were threatened into compliance by the people who were supposed

to give a shit about our well-being and happiness.

Old family feuds. A blood war that has raged for longer than we've been alive. But past grudges meant nothing to the teenagers we were when we met in elite training. Bad blood couldn't touch the passion that united us as we grew into our own.

Away from the umbrella coverage of our overbearing families, we thrived. We worked tirelessly in our classes. Honing ourselves into two of the most dangerous operatives on this side of the globe.

During the day, we became experts in specific areas. Firearms, hand-to-hand combat, piloting almost any method of transportation, and how to murder without ever being detected or suspected.

At night we specialized in only one subject— each other.

By the time we graduated, I couldn't determine which I would consider myself better at. I knew I was the best at killing and making Ilya come over and over again. Like a record stuck on repeat.

I enjoyed listening to the screams of my targets as I flayed them open and ripped their soul from their ﬂesh and bone

conﬁnement. But I much preferred the sound of my name being ripped from Ilya's throat over and over again.

I loved when her airy, light, feminine voice would turn rough and raspy from overuse. Until she lost it completely and lay quivering and utterly spent beneath me.

Which is exactly how I plan on tonight playing out for her.

Once she's fully accepted the ribbed handle, I only have to wait moments before I feel her entire body relax into a state of readiness.

Which means the time for being gentle has passed.

I have a Ph.D. in the little assassin with her pussy wrapped around my weapon. This means I know ‘exactly’ how hard

she likes to be fucked.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than getting an arm-workout in with her. But I can't help but torture her, just a little.

I start with a few slow pumps, which she tolerates. But when my pace never increases, and my pressure stays the same, the little French ﬁrecracker burns through her patience like a short fuse.

Ilya’s hand ﬂies from my wrist, back up to my throat. Her grip much more menacing than the time before. When her thumb presses down on my jugular, I feel my blood pounding ﬁtfully behind my eye sockets.

Ilya warns, "I don't know whose bed you've been warming, “Evexella,” but if you don't start remembering how to fuck me right, you better learn how to ﬂy. Because I'm about to toss your sexy ass right off of this roo—"

My grin spread wide across my face. Before she’s ﬁnished speaking, I thrust into her hard enough to turn her threat into a cry of unadulterated pleasure. I pound into her so hard she's forced to slap one hand against the roof to stop her body's upwards migration.

"Oui, juste comme ça!" (Yes, just like that!) she screams to the stars above.

The blade begins slicing into my forearm at the reckless speed of my thrusts. Hot, syrupy blood begins to drip from my arm to the shingles beneath us. Some of it even flows down the handle to get introduced to Ilya’s pussy, over and over.

Our eyes meet, and electricity crackles in the cool night air between us.

I slap at her exposed tits a few times with my free paw. Fresh arousal coats the insides of my thighs at each wholly satisfied sound she makes in return. Each sound comes with a very grateful squeeze of my throat.

A few nipple bites later, she's clawing at the back of my head and dipping her hand underneath my button-up shirt to maul the bare skin of my back as well. The painful scraping of those cat-like nails she's equipped with is her way of possessively marking me as I had once done to her.

Once was enough.

Because, once upon a time, I had carved my name into the skin below her ear. Arranging the three letters vertically, one stacked above the other.

V E X

It was a permanent reminder of my ownership. She never even batted an eye in the process of being sliced into. We had both been through brutal lessons designed to eradicate signs of weakness. It was the type of pain that would have brought grown men to their knees.

Ilya brushed it off like an inconvenient series of bites from

a sadistic mosquito.

Afterwards, she asked me to claim her for real. She demanded that I show her I was worthy of the honor by forcibly taking control. Otherwise, she swore to take a branding iron to that same spot and burn away any trace of my name on her skin.

She wanted a bloody death match. Forced a ﬁght out of me by striking ﬁrst.

That same day, Ilya gifted me with a permanent marking of my own. In the form

of a gruesome scar stretching from my right eyebrow, across the bridge of my nose, down my left cheek, to the strong ridge of my jaw.

My love had nearly relieved me of my right eye entirely, in her effort to make me earn her submission.

But I did it. It was no walk in the park, even with the grip of muscle mass and my inherently stocky build. I may be a brute but she’s a femme fatale. As deadly and as quick as a viper. Brute strength alone would never have bested her.

But best her, I did. Earn her, I did.

Fuck the complete submission into her? Now that I most certainly did.

And I made it hurt. Because that's how she wanted it. She asked me to. Begged me to.

I loved every barbaric second of it.

Have I mentioned how much I enjoy making this girl scream my name? I'm hopelessly addicted to the surge of pride. The victory of having permanently imprinted my name on her vocal cords.

I feel invincible with the power that ﬂows through my veins, because I've tamed the untamable mare. I've overcome the goddess of war. I've forced the almighty assassin, Ilyasviel Cadieux, to her knees and made her call out to me in supplication. Time and time again.

I pull the handle swiftly from Ilya's hungry cunt, watching her eyes swim back into focus and return to me from their pleasure haze.

"Vex?" she says, sounding a tad lost.

I plant my bare ass on the rooftop beside her, driving the twisted blades of my knife into the slightly slanted surface. Down in the open space between my thighs. Barely an inch away from my own sex.

My pants are at my ankles now, and my legs are spread as far as their conﬁnement allows. The formidable blade stands at the apex of my thighs, though almost all of it has disappeared into the rooftop below.

The long, wet handle shines in the pale glow of the stars and moon above, coated with Ilya's arousal.

I catch her eyeing the state of it, and then she regards my new position with interest. Before she opens her mouth, I've already leaned over and pulled her slender ﬁgure over the top of mine.

I help guide her back down onto the erect handle. My eyes are glued on her pussy's newest meal. I witness it greedily accepting every inch of my weapon.

I only have to slip my ass down the inclined roof a few centimeters to close the gap. I stop when I feel the very edge of where the handle meets the steel. It brushes against my pulsing clit and send lightning through my veins.

The weapon sticks out from the roof just far enough that when I thrust my hips up to meet the underside of Ilya's thighs, I'm also rubbing myself against the ribbed design.

I groan out something unintelligible. Ilya's eyes ﬂash with ﬁery lust when she comprehends my intentions.

Once I've planted my feet ﬁrmly against the rooftop, and her skin is ﬂush to mine, I grab ﬁrmly onto her waist. My hips start pumping. Up and down, and up and down, with short and powerful movements.

Ilya rides the handle well, and I make sure to drop my hips low enough to where she's taking the entirety of it on every down stroke. All the while, I'm grinding my own cunt into the revealed part of the handle as soon as my thighs raise her up off of it. Then I make her take it all in again.

She's showing trust in me, knowing how dangerous this is. Trust, I was afraid, had been lost in the literal crossfire of our history. This could go wrong in so many ways.

Yet, she's given me complete control by resting her whole weight on me, and fully enjoying the experience. Her head is tossed back, and her ﬁngers are threaded through her thick, honey-chestnut locks, pulling them up and off her shoulders.

My eyes slowly travel up the curves and ridges of her body. I have the paragon of perfection riding on top of me. I remember every detail of the toned expanse of her slender stomach, and the rounded peaks of her supple breasts.

Beneath the left one is an X-shaped birthmark the size of a penny. It's so light in color you wouldn't know it was there unless she told you. Or if you had stumbled upon it one night, as your tongue traveled the distance from her treasure to her chest.

I know Ilya's body like I know my own. Time and space haven't affected my memory. It hasn't rusted the massive

metal claw she used to capture my heart. Nor has it dampened the all-consuming wildﬁre of fierce love that keeps burning for this woman.

When our eyes meet, her darkened irises have enough heat of their own to make me melt beneath her.

I dig my blunt nails into her hips. Now I’m buck my own wildly, impaling her upon the makeshift dildo without mercy.

Her cries echo along the rooftops, riding the night air for anyone to hear.

"Oh, oui, baisez-moi, Vex! Oui, fouts-moi! Oui!" (Oh, yes, fuck me! Yes, fuck me! Yes!)

Ilya is by far the most vocal French woman I've ever slept with. It riles me up. It injects me with animalistic desire. It’s adrenaline that fuels my body's movements. Her exquisite, naked ﬁgure drives me wild. But her vulgarity and desperation turn me utterly feral.

My own orgasm builds like a tsunami. I fear there should be an alert issued to the public, warning them of the impending ecstasy about to come crashing down. TheA climactic crash of all-encompassing pleasure about to make landfall.

What ﬁnally brings us to that point is when I give voice to a sacrilegious thought that invades my mind.

"This Damascus steel has been drenched in so much blood," I grunt out through my frenzied hip thrusts.

"And I think nothing would be better than to watch my angel absolve its sins, by baptizing it in her cum."

"God...Xcella! Je vais jouir!" (I'm going to come.)

"Scream my name, Ilya. Tell the world where your loyalties lie." I make my final demand, even as we both take a running jump off that cliff.

I'm thrown face first into one of the most powerful orgasms

I've ever had. It's made all the more intense as Ilya screams my name for the villa's residents and any nosy operatives within a five-mile radius to hear.

Spots cloud my vision as we both experience the waves of ecstasy, tossing us around with our shared pleasure. As she begins to gain control of herself, she rises from my knife and collapses on top of me like a dead weight.

## Condemnation

Ilya nuzzles into the space below my chin. I'm caught off guard when I'm hit with another powerful wave. Except this time, it's nostalgia. Nostalgia induced by the faint scent of cherries and rosewater. It drifts from her silky chestnut locks that tickle my nose.

A few seconds tick by, both of us too boneless to move. Just the sound of our heavy breathing rapidly returning to normal due to our over-familiarity with physical exertion.

When the wordless silence is broken, it's with words I'm

already prepared to hear. My button-down shirt has been growing warm and moist on a certain spot on my chest. Where it captures my angel’s silent tears.

"I'm so sorry, Vex."

A flash of shining steel. The sharp prick of my own kunai against the thin skin stretched over my jugular.

The blade bites down, and I feel the tell-tale warmth of my blood. It’s dripping a weak trail down my neck, to my pressed collar. Ilya’s barely nicked me, but she's done it on purpose, a warning.

I know it was intentional, even though the shaking of her hand would suggest otherwise.

I look her in her eyes, now boring into mine. Her eyebrows are dipped, hazel orbs washed clean of emotion. Half-hidden behind narrowed lids. Classic expression wipe. It's forced, though. As close as we are, I can see the pain flickering there like a glitch on a computer screen.

"Ilya-"

"What are you waiting for, Ilya? Kill her. Finish this."

Ilya still lies on my stomach, now pinning me with her body and my throwing knife. I raise my head to the source of the voice, looking over Ilya’s shoulder.

Of course.

Her father, Jean, now occupies the rooftop adjacent to ours.

Jean, is my number one fan. And by that, I mean that he despises my very existence. He is the hooded head of the Serpent Clan and the Cadieux Corporation, a powerful underground ring of assassins that have been locked in a rivalry with my family for my entire life.

Beside him, is his son, Ilya’s younger half-brother. Another ruthless murderer who uses unpredictable and shameful methods to achieve his goals. He's a blubbering barbarian. Not nearly as proficient as Ilya or myself in the art of reaping souls.

On her father's other side stands Franco. His arms are crossed. A gun rides his hip, and a condescending sneer rides his annoying fucking face.

Franco has been promised Ilya's hand in marriage after the undeserving prick did some professional favors for Jean. Including killing my cousin a year ago, when I stubbornly refused to die.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that this was a setup.

These three stooges sent Ilya to drop in on me, seduce me, and either kill me or stall long enough so that all four could finally end the heir to their competitor's organization.

My gaze shifts back to Ilya.

She doesn't look like a traitor to me. Not at all. If anything, she looks as if she's being ripped in half.

I search her face with earnest. Try to tap into her soul through the reflection of my hazel eyes.

"They don't own you, Ilya. It will only ever be me."

I hear Franco snort a laugh and spit. I ignore it.

Slowly, so as not to invite a violent reaction, I lift my left hand and wrap it around her wrist. All three men suddenly seem alert and start to close in on us.

But I keep my eyes on Ilya.

"Since you're mine, I want you to listen to me.”

"Finish this, baby. I want you to do it. Do whatever it is that you need to do. If you need to kill me, then kill me,"

I say, pulling the knife even further against my throat to make my point.

"Just know that I refuse to be killed by anyone other than you. I would be proud to meet my end at your hand, Ilyasviel. It was always supposed to be you."

A tremor rolls through her. Tears slip down her cheeks and splash on the bare strip of skin below my abdominal muscles.

The three assassins step onto our rooftop, and I know my time is up. Ilya's destiny has always been intertwined with mine. One way or another, this chapter of our lives is coming to its end.

"Je t'aimerai toujours, mon petit ange de la mort." (I will always love you, my little angel of death.)

I pull her close and whisper the words against her lips.

Jean's cry of outrage is immediately met with a bullet through his head—an effective way to shut him up.

Renard catches one seconds later, right as he's comprehended his father's death.

Franco is a little quicker on the draw and has already pulled his gun out and trained it on me. I'm not quick enough to swing the pistol I've procured from Ilya's thigh holster back around to him.

He fires the weapon at my chest from maybe 5 meters away. It feels like being struck by lightning, in a way. Pain blossoms from the bullets entry point and spreads through me like a virus.

About a second after that, I watch Franco take a knife to his heart. He stumbles backward two steps

before his third hits open air, and he disappears below the roof’s edge.

"We did it." I manage to mumble out before collapsing back on the roof.

"Vex?! No, no, no, don't close your eyes. Please, mon amour. Stay with me," Ilya says frantically, trying to apply pressure

to the bullet wound.

It continues to gush out ungodly amounts of blood.

Her eyes are wide, red-rimmed from her tears. Tears that didn't get in the way of her perfect aim, when she skewered Franco with my kunai, backhanded.

One dainty palm applies pressure to my chest while the other turns every article of clothing between us inside out. Trying to locate a cell phone. When she does, it slips through her fingers multiple times, my blood lubricating the electronic device to the point of her not being able to grasp it, much less use it.

"Ilya." I use what remaining strength I have to place my hand

on hers. She's shaking badly.

I've never seen her shake or lose her composure outside of bedroom activities. Not until tonight. She's always been calm and collected, even while staring down the barrel of a gun.

My touch steadies her enough to unlock the device.

"Call my father," I tell her.

"L'hôpital," she counters immediately.

"Da will know what to do. I need to talk to him now, Ilya."

She doesn't look at me or acknowledge my words, but the phone rings only once before I hear my father's husky voice say my name.

"Da. It's done."

"Proud of you, Evexella. Where are you? Is Ilya still alive?"

"Oui," Ilya confirms before rattling off an address and making my father aware of my condition in French.

My hearing starts tunneling out, but I catch my father barking orders at his men to send help.

"Help is coming, Vex." Dad sounds worried. That's a first for him as well.

Spots cloud my vision, and I recognize all of the signs I'm about to lose consciousness.

"Da," I croak out. "Da, if I don't make it, promise me you’ll take care of Ilya. Help her take over her father's position. End the feud."

"No. No, no, no! I don't want that," Ilya cries, dropping the phone beside us and holding me against her. She feels so warm, especially compared to the icy chill now spreading

throughout my extremities.

"Je te veux. Vex, s'il te plaît, je te veux." (I want you. Vex, please, I just want you.)

She begins repeating the same two phrases over and over, rocking me in her arms. As I grow colder, both of their voices sound like whispers. Like distant memories.

"N'y va pas." (Don't go.)

"Vex, don't talk like that you'll be fine. You and Ilya will get your well-earned out and get to live happily ever after in your little beach shack away from all of this. No more killing. A nice peaceful life, just like you planned. The papers are signed; the property is yours, kid." My father does his best to encourage me.

"Promise m-me, Da..."

My world begins to fade. I hear my father's promise to take care of Ilya like his own daughter, but it feels like a dream.

I look one last time into the hazel eyes I've obsessed over, dreamed about and given my life for. I try to convey everything she means to me in that last look. I think it works because she begins to sob harder than before.

It's as if she rocks me to sleep in her arms. And after the life I've lived, and things I had done... I can't help but feel insanely lucky.

I'll die in Ilya's loving embrace.

The past several years have been so lonely, so devoid of hope for a future where I could see her again or hold her against me.

But now I get to be held by the one I love, looking into her eyes and drifting into peaceful oblivion. The last thing I'll

ever hear is her sweet, melodic voice admitting just how much I meant to her.

"Tu ne peux pas me laisser." (You can't leave me.)

"I just got you back; please stay with me."

"N'y va pas."

(Don't go.)

"Je t'aime." (I love you)

"Vex... please don't do this to me... je t'aime."

"Je t'aime."

## Salvation

"Truth or dare, Illy?" Jerissa inquires, gazing at the ethereal beauty beside her.

She sits close enough to my love in the half-circle booth, that their shoulders seem glued together. Jer inclines her head towards Ilya even further. It's clear she is comfortable with the near proximity.

They've been sharing affectionate vibes all night. A conspiratorial gleam has become a permeant fixture in Jerissas' chocolate eyes. A stray curl escapes from behind her ear to fall in front of a heart-shaped face.

"Truth." Ilya responds, tucking the bit of hair back behind Jerissa's ear. She leans into the beautiful Dominican girl until their foreheads touch.

I watch the two of them with a small grin, nursing my brew. My spot at the end of the large curved booth, makes me one piece of bread in this sexy femme sandwich. Jerissa's long-term boyfriend, sitting on the opposite side of me, is the other slice. He appears impressed by their little show.

Ilya's voice is low and her accent hypnotic, entrancing us all every time she speaks. But no matter how close she gets to Jerissa, one delicate hand stays attached to me. If her fingers aren't twisted up in mine, they are creeping up my inner thigh or stroking the short hairs at my nape.

Ilyasviel and her new best friend have set the tone for this evening. A dark bar, just the four of us. Plenty of privacy and plenty of liquor to keep us company. This is how a Tuesday night should be, if you ask me.

"Hmm. Ok, we need a little time to think." Jer taps her chin.

Both beauties fall away from each other, into their respective partners' arms.

The Dominican lays against her boyfriend's chest. They both look over at us and I can tell they’re up to no good. Next thing I know, they're ducking behind Jerissa's waterfall of dark hair to brainstorm risqué ideas.

My innocent little assassin tucks herself under my arm, patiently waiting. A beat passes, then she inclines her chin to plant a soft kiss on my mouth.

"Zis will be interesting, no?" She whispers against my lips.

Regardless of being perfectly fluent in all European languages, Ilya now uses English at all times, with a healthy dose of her French pronunciation. With me, she's only ever speaking the French language if she doesn't want someone else to understand. Or if we’re shagging.

"When are things not interesting when you're involved, my love? Every time we play a game together, I barely make it out alive."

"Oh please, you always survive! Not only zat, but you get upgrades!" She whispers with indignation.

Ilya raps on my chest with a great deal of unseen force. The metal plate buried beneath my skin makes a tinny noise. Most humans bodies don't make that sound. I'm sure I'm the only one able to hear it, since it's vibrating through my insides.

The plate was a necessary addition in order to keep my heart beating. I'm not entirely sure on the mechanics, so don't ask.

My surgery was in the back room of a safe house. The doctor who performed it isn't recognized on any medical boards, nor is he technically licensed to practice medicine.

At least, not anymore.

He claims that's only because he has "devoted his life to the experimental progression of medicine."

All I know is, it took that crackpot a full day of having me under the knife to keep me kicking.

I really shouldn't talk too much shit. At least I am alive and celebrating early retirement with the love of my life. No more hired hits, no more feud. Just a unremarkable beach house in an undisclosed location. Our lives are our own.

You know what that means?

Ilya and I made it out of the game for good.

It's not like we've been in it as long as some of our family members have. I'm only turning 31 this year, and Ilya is right behind me. The lifespan of a contract killer is fleeting. If you aren't the head of one of the major families in the business (hell, even if you are) it's an anomaly to be alive and not serving life below a max security prison by the age of 40.

If you are neither incarcerated or unalived by then, you really only have two options. The first is to become an instructor at CKU and gain immunity from serving time. In which case, you also receive the university's protection from the enemies you have made throughout your career.

Or, you can try your hand at retirement. Use your buckets of money to go off the grid and into hiding.

But you had better become damn invisible if you do. Contracts on retirees always have the best payout. They tend to have a long list of compiled enemies, and have gained too much knowledge throughout their career. When they disappear, they tend to take that knowledge with them. And people get fidgety over some potentially spilled secrets.

We aren't under any illusions about how our retirement is going to play out. Ilya and I have made an impressive list of enemies between the two of us, and some of them are bound to get lucky locating our little paradise. I highly doubt that Ilyasviel's brother will be the last soul ever harvested by “the Reaper.”

However, now I get to spend ample amounts of time surfing, instead of murdering chaps to fill up all of my time. Ilya surfs with me, but her joy is found in the discovery of new and exciting dishes to introduce me to. She's a fantastic chef, which makes her a triple threat. If she's not killing actual baddies, she's killing it in the bedroom, or in the kitchen.

We have plain old hobbies now. Dreams we get to chase after. No high-profile targets to track and contracts to fulfill.

Retirement at its finest.

And yeah, okay...

We may have to defend ourselves from idiots in the near future. There is bound to be a few who have the balls (but lack the brain cells) to realize who they are fucking with. But, nobody's life is perfect. I believe this is as close to a happy ending that two psychology unsound women, like ourselves, will ever be.

Ilya wanted to work with kids and teach them things she knew would be helpful. She's so patient with them, and has even had me along to help out. Self defense and foreign language classes, mainly.

She said I was too intense in the former, and has only asked me back for the latter.

Ilya found her true calling here. She works with kids and is revered as an angel among them.

I, on the other hand, have always known my purpose. All I ever truly wanted was to be by Ilya’s side, and have her back in any and all situations.

I offer my gratitude every day to whatever higher power has allowed it, because that's exactly where I am. With her. Now and always.

This metal plate Ilya knocked on, also doubles as a bulletproof shield. The organ in my chest cavity is now protected from future frontal assaults. Very helpful, indeed.

However, my true heart is the piece of me that contains my pain, my possessive nature, my obsession and my love. That part of me is vital for my survival, and it can't be shielded with a few centimeters of impenetrable metal.

Which is fine, because I don't carry that heart inside of this mortal shell of mine.

My true heart stays in Ilya's hands. She's had it since the day we first met. The moment she batted those lashes and proceeded to roundhouse kick me across the face, she owned me.

My only assignment these days is the most important one I've ever had. Protect Ilyasviel Cadieux. Give her unforgettable memories, undivided loyalty, and love her until we grow old together.

Mulling Ilya's words over in my head, goes as expected. She's not wrong. She never is, really but I'm loathe to admit that to her. I do survive. Like a cockroach in a nuclear blast, I adapt and get stronger. My life is so much better, even after that prick shot me a few years ago.

"Baby, you are my upgrade. You’re the reason I’m alive. I'll rise from the dead, so I can be by your side for eternity." I say, kissing her again on the lips. “I’ll play any game you ask me to.”

"Only ze Reaper herself could say such a thing. But if you do go decide to go all zombie on me, be sure to come back immediately. I would rather you not be half decayed and gross.” She wrinkles her button nose. “At least have all of your pretty face in tact, ok?"

"So you can feel better about the necrophilia you're going to engage in?" I smirk.

"Because I don't want you getting ze sheets dirty while I fuck my zombie girlfriend." Ilya fires back with a wink.

Her lips taste like sugar and tart rose every time they press into mine.

Jerissa and Dino break from their brainstorming session. “Ok, Illy! Tell us the truth, have you ever had risky sex before?"

Ilya's eyebrows raise, and her eyes flick from Jerissa's, and back to mine.

"Risky? As in...?”

"Risky as in, dangerous. Like almost getting caught. Or doing it in a location that could end up with some serious consequences." Dino supplies in his deep baritone. He wraps a thick, hairy, Italian arm around Jerissa. Even thicker than his arms are his eyebrows, which make a move towards his hairline.

Dino is a total Guido, but he's good people. He's a hell of a boxer, which is how we met.

The first day I went to check out the fighting gym in town, I was enamored by the old school feel of it. It reminded me of our ring in the basement of the house my dad and uncles brought me up in.

The second day, I walked right in and threw a fat check on the owner's desk. Offered way more money than the gym was worth.

The mountain of a man we are having drinks with tonight, walked in after his uncle came close to fainting from all the zeros on that little slip of paper.

Turns out, I had to fight the big motherfucker just to get the right to buy it. The old man didn’t want to feel like he was "selling out."

After a good few rounds of fun, I ended up walking out of the gym- tired, sweaty, and sore. Cheesing like a fucking joker.

The Mountain man had no qualms letting me buy the gym off his uncle after that.

He did have a sore jaw for 3 solid weeks, though. Complained about it every time I saw him.

Which was often, seeing as how the big Guido became a regular part of my life. He's good to Jerissa, whom Ilya has become inseparable from. Turned out to be a crackin business partner, too. The bar we're hanging out in tonight belongs to both of us, now. We've made plenty of coin, and have enjoyed the perks of our investment. Like shutting it down for the evening, and hosting a private party just for us.

Tonight, we celebrate our success and newfound friendships.

"Or dangerous as in... like... you know. Possible bodily harm?” Those last few words in Jerissa’s smoky tone forces me to tune back in to the conversation.

“Like hard-core bondage or something." The Dominican finishes with waggling eyebrows.

"I see." Ilya drags the words out, an amused twinkle in her eye.

Contemplating her response, she takes a moment to sip from her glass. Long, freshly manicured nails dig into my inner thigh. The hint of pain and the warmth of her hand stirs my simmering libido.

We share a knowing look, and my lip quirks.

Jerissa witnesses our cheeky exchange. “I sense a good story! Oh, do tell. And don't leave out any of the good stuff."

I lift my Guinness to hide my grin. She has no idea what she's asking for.

"Honestly..." Ilya admits, "...Vex and I don't know how to fuck each other without risk involved. For one thing, we were always in danger of losing everything if our families found out."

“Including our lives.” I add. "They truly despise each other. Our family legacies banked upon us being sworn enemies, and Ilya’s father would have killed me if he could have."

Tried to kill me, more like.

Jer seems to deflate. “Well that’s dramatic as fuck. But not as sexy or fun of an answer as I'd hoped to hear."

"Ohhh.” Ilya realizes what her friend was fishing for. “Well, zis one time, Evexella made me ride the handle of her knife like ze world's most dangerous strap-on." Ilya says evenly, shrugging one shoulder while taking another sip of wine.

I decide to throw more details in while our friends' shock is still fresh. My tone follows her’s, staying light and conversational.

"Mmm. We were doing it on a rooftop 3 stories up, too. Thank God I'm a dab hand at making Ilya come quickly. Her family interrupted us right afterwards. Bloody rude." I shake my head at the memory. Little do they know I was shot the same night.

How about that for a double dose of risk?

My subtle boast of prowess does not go unnoticed by my girlfriend. Of course she doesn’t let me get away with it.

"Please." Ilya rolls her eyes, taunting me. "I had you drenching my hand before you even cut my leggings open. Which you still owe me for, by ze way."

Both of my eyebrows shoot towards the ceiling. "Owe you, eh? For the orgasm, or for the tights?"

"Oui." My fiesty temptress gives me a placating smile, and flutters her dark lashes.

I nearly sputter at her vague affirmation. Ilya lifts one hand so she can pull her long ponytail over her shoulder. She twists a single finger in her wavy locks, cocking an eyebrow at me.

I lay a searing look on her, silently communicating my thoughts.

“Too much attitude, and too little space in this booth to do something about it.”

She bites down on a smile and I know she's reading my mind.

We've both become too invested in our memories and teasing. Neither of us look away from each other to check our friends' reactions.

"I always pay my debts, with interest." I say, indignant. "However, if you didn't want my cum in your hand or your knickers to be sliced open, then guess what? You, my love, shouldn't have greeted me by shoving your gun in my mouth."

Dino's beer spews from his lips and onto the table. I glance at them both, only just remembering their presence.

Jerissa stares at Ilya. Her jaw has dropped so low it practically sits on the table. It's probably been there awhile. She’s either oblivious to her boyfriend's coughing fit, or she doesn’t give a shit.

Oh wait, never mind. She’s hands him a napkin, missing his hand entirely. Her saucer-sized eyeballs are stuck on Ilya.

Ilya doesn't even notice the staring. She's too busy staring at me. Her cheeks have flushed a gorgeous pink, while plump lips are now pressed together in annoyance at my words.

"How about zis, then?” She snaps back. “Next time I'll make sure it's my pussy in your mouth. Maybe that way I can get my rocks off first. For once. Hm?"

Great, now my cheeks are scalding with her implications. Is she saying I'm selfish? Or that have no stamina? In front of our friends, no less!

Gods above, she really knows how to get a rise out of me. She always has. I think we both live for the sexual tension stirred up by these trivial spats.

My hand shoots out to grab her chin. She's as fast as I am, so by the time I've grabbed her face, her hand is already encircling my wrist. Instinctive self-defense.

Those shining hazel eyes burn bright with her excitement. I lean in to meet them with my own glimmering gaze, though mine are laden with sinister promises. I can practically smell her arousal. Now that there’s the potential for a little bit of danger, she's as turned on as I am.

"Next time you put that brilliant pussy in my face, little angel, I promise to skip the knife altogether and shove a suppressor in it."

I think I’ve managed to rob her of words. A damn shame really. But the way she bites her lip is an aesthetic aphrodisiac all on its own.

"What do you say, mon ange? Tu veux être une salope pour mon arme? (Do you want to be a slut for my gun?)"

Ilya's nails dig into the bare skin of my wrist.

"Oui, si vous plait." Her voice is raspy, and tells me everything.

In a flash of movement, she's straddling my lap. The wrist I was using to hold her face is now pressed above me, against the high-back booth. She holds it there with one hand and traces my lips with her other.

Her voice morphs into a sickly type of sweet, but holds a menacing seductiveness. "Si ma chatte n'est pas en danger de mort dans l'heure qui vient, je jure devant Dieu que je te tire une balle dans la tête cette fois."

I chuckle, raising my hips to press against hers, throwing petrol on the flames flickering between us.

"I believe you, baby. And I’m looking forward to it.” And I'm completely serious as I say it.

She leans down and kisses me, biting hard enough to draw blood on my lower lip. Then her light weight vanishes, and she's headed in the direction of the loo.

I suck on my bottom lip, savoring the flavor of my blood.

Our friends try to gather their wits about them, but they can't clear the dazed looks in their eyes quick enough.

"What did she..?" Jerissa says

"Oh, right.” I remember that our friends can’t actually speak French. “She basically threatened to shoot me in the head if her pussy isn't in mortal peril within the next hour.” I translate to them in a dreamy voice.

Ilya rounds a table and I stand up to drool over her legs a bit longer. It's still odd to me, seeing them so bare and without holsters attached. The short cut offs she's modeling show the firm curve of each cheek. They do the slightest jiggle with every shift of her hips, putting me under hypnosis.

And under that hypnosis I’m experiencing the strongest compulsion. The urge to get on my knees, take those perfect globes into my hands, and imprint my teeth into the swell of each one.

I drop back into the booth with a heavy thump, and wolf whistle at the sexy assassin.

All eyes are on her as she twists her body back around to face us.

Ilya presses her lips to the inside of her left hand, then curls her fingers like she's grabbing onto an ammo clip. Her right hand mimics holding a gun, and she slams the side of it into her left palm. It's a practiced motion that Ilya has done countless times, when loading her firearm.

Then she points her imaginary pistol with her kiss in the barrel, at me. One eye closes, and the other lines up with the index and middle finger of her right hand. Both of which, are aimed straight at my heart.

"Pow." She draws the word out suggestively, bucking her hand back to demonstrate the recoil of her pretend semi-automatic.

I receive her affection by clutching my chest. I even fall back a little in the booth, playing along with the impact of the kiss, as if it were a real bullet. Then I wink at her.

She winks back. Not once does she break stride while turning with a ballerina’s grace to continue on her way.

The lights on that half of the bar are off, and she gets harder to see as she rounds the corner, disappearing into the dark hallway leading to the washroom.

It's impossible to stop the grin turning up the corners of my mouth. I right myself and grab my beer for another gulp. As my bottle lowers from in front of my face, the first thing I see are the wide eyed looks from our friends.

"Well that was...uhm...different?" Jerissa seems incredulous still from the previous bomb that Ilya dropped. "Very creative way to blow a kiss."

"Yeah." My voice is full of adoration for my naughty angel. "Ilya's a crack shot, so it's fitting. She likes to shoot me right here, you know." I tell them, tapping just above my heart.

"Awww." The Dominican swoons, forgetting all about her shock from a minute ago. "She hit you with an Eros arrow, huh? You two are so fucking adorable."

Dino sighs dramatically. "Bro you're getting a little too cheesy on me. We get it, you're in love. I swear we have to pop all your floating heart bubbles if we want to come anywhere near the two of you’s."

I glance towards the spot Ilya disappeared. I long for the brilliant smile she'll unleash, the second she shows back up.

They are both right. I'm fucking whipped like a disobedient puppy. And twice as eager to please my owner.

In a faraway tone, I stare at the dark bar corner and admit the truth to our closest friends.

"I am desperately in love with her, yes. But, Ilya shot me with a 9mm bullet. Not an arrow."

I do this sometimes. You can never be too careful. We've known these two for a year and a half straight, but Ilya and I have plenty of enemies and so we've done extensive research on their backgrounds. Even still, I like to drop nuggets of truth to check for reactions, just in case one or both of them are not who they seem.

So far, they've had plenty of opportunity to strike, and have proved to be true friends with no hidden intentions. But I've seen infiltrations and betrayals that I have trouble wrapping my head around. It's in my paranoid nature to stay on my guard, in case our enemies are playing the long game.

For a moment, they are both completely silent. An unsure smile sits sideways on Jerissa's exotic features. Dino's eyebrows are trying to touch each other, not a difficult feat by any means. What's funny is the way his mouth hangs open like his lips can't figure out how to approach each other.

Then Jerissa let's out a giggle. "You have the craziest sense of humor, Vex."

I wink and take another drink, fighting a smile.

Dino finally catches on to his girlfriends train of thought and shakes his head with a chuckle.

"You're fuckin weird, bro." His Jersey accent is strong when he says things like that.

My elbows land on the table and I lean towards them both. In a low voice I concede, "Guys I...what do you think about me asking Ilya to marry me next weekend, on her birthday?"

Both of their eyes go round as saucers and Jerissa let's out a squeak of excitement. My hand shoots across the space between us, to cover her mouth.

"Shhh! Jer, come on babe!" I hiss at her.

She pulls my hand down and lowers her voice to a stage whisper, but her words come out all strung together and at a higher frequency.

"Vexohmygod! Oh my god are you serious?! Finally! I'm so happy for you!!!"

Dino even looks impressed.

"Finally pulling the trigger on the next step? 'Bout time!" He says low.

"You think it will go well?” I ask, a little ball of anxiety forming in my stomach.

It happens every time I think about the plans I've made for our future. I love Ilyasviel more than life itself, and I know she loves me. But in the back of my mind, the memory of our time apart nags at me. I get flashbacks of the night she shot me. I relive laying there on the cold stone, having resigned myself to death as I painted the alley with my blood.

The nerves that accompany the memory nearly paralyze me. The idea of her saying no for any reason and cutting me out of her life once more, is debilitating.

"Vex." Jerissa grabs my limp hand, still laying across the table and squeezes it. She looks at me with concern etched in her heavily decorated eyes.

"Vex, it's all she talks about. She brings up wanting to get married to you at least once a day. She's been dropping obvious hints for weeks, dumb-dumb. Even Dino has noticed. She wants to get married. She wants you to ask her."

Her sincerity and warm cocoa irises are enough to calm the storm of doubt that had been growing within.

"Yeah?"

"Absolutely." They respond in unison, before smiling at one another and sharing a short kiss.

I nod at them, decision made.

"Cheers." I say, lifting the bottle. They both grab their respective drinks, but before we can clink them together, a loud noise comes from the direction of the bathroom. A distinct thump that's hard to mistake.

I've been accustomed to the sounds of combat my entire life. That was the sound of a body slamming into a wall, I'm sure of it.

Ilya.

## Damnation

I'm already up and crossing the bar at top speed. Thank the universe I'm wearing board shorts, because they are prime sprinting material. I’m also barefoot, my slides sitting abandoned back at the booth. I'm much faster this way, thanks to all of the running on the beach I’ve been doing.

Instead of rounding the bar, I jump and slide across the lacquered corner to save precious seconds. Dino wiped it down only an hour ago, so thankfully it is neither sticky, or wet with spilled alcohol.

"Vex, where are you going?" I hear Dino calling out. My ears are trying to tune in ahead of me, listening for any other indications of what I'm rushing into.

“It’s fine, just stay there!” I call back, hoping they choose to listen.

My feet hit the floor, and I turn down the hallway. The bathrooms lie just beyond a neon sign proclaiming "Piss Stop" in Budweiser colors. It flickers weakly in the shadow plagued corridor.

The moment I start down the hall, obvious sounds of a struggle become more pronounced.

I’m only two steps away from the door that leads to the women's room. The hallway lighting is minimal, with only the neon sign casting it's eerie, reddish glow.

A figure dressed entirely in black gear, comes flying backwards out of the swinging bathroom door.

The intruder is large, presumably a man. He sure makes a manly grunt when he slams into the wall on the opposite side of the hallway. His head hits the sturdy old oak with a resounding crack. The shadow cloaked body slumps to the floor, unmoving. I'm mid stride, and have yet to put on the brakes. Instead of stopping, I stutter my steps. Lining the shot up, I come through and fire off a kick strong enough to knock his head from his shoulders. For good measure, of course.

As if had just scored an extra 3 points on a field goal, the momentum of the kick spins me 90 degrees. I come to a stop facing the restroom, reaching my hand out to catch the door before it can swing shut.

Ilya comes striding out like an avenging warrior with all the flare of a runway model. She's rocking an off the shoulder top, currently torn at the collar and slightly askew. A thin, red line crosses her throat in a horizontal stripe. The irritated skin is puffing up and growing more prominent by the second. Ilya steps through the door I hold open for her, wiping blood from her lip with eyes narrowed into slits. Coming to a stop, she stares down at her attacker with evident disdain.

I catch her around the waist and draw her into me, keeping her there with one arm. My hands lifts to cup her chin. I use it to direct her eyes to mine.

My thumb runs over a split in her bottom lip while examining her for damage. She pooches them both out, kissing the pad of it before sucking the tip between them. Through thick lashes, she pins me with a smoldering gaze that leaves me slick and wanting.

The violence has definitely gotten her in the mood. And that mood is contagious.

"Are you ok, mon ange?"

"Oui, mon amour. Zis fucker tried to garrote me while I was washing my hands. Putain de lâche (Fucking coward.)" She pulls from my hold to spit blood at his crumpled form.

I gently kiss her forehead, then turn to take a knee next to our uninvited guest. I'm not at all polite, ripping the generic mask off of his face.

"Ah. Well, aren't you a sight for sore eyes." I say, to him.

First things first, I decide to go ahead and frisk Ilyasviel's first cousin.

Rudolpho Cadieux of the Serpent Clan. His enemies know him as Redrum. But my people always refer to this hapless idiot as “Reckless Rudy.”

Looks like his recklessness has finally gotten him killed.

I take his sidearm from its holster, the suppressor from his inside pocket, a tactical combat knife off his belt, and the smaller pistol from the holster around his ankle. Ilya dips back into the restroom for a moment. She readjusts her shirt, and retrieves the wire he tried to choke her with, off of the tile floor.

"What should we do with him?" I inquire quietly.

I briefly imagine the scene that would occur if Jerissa or Dino came to check on us. What would we say to explain the unconscious man in our bathroom hallway?

“Not to worry kids! What we have here is a good old fashioned case of a rabid assassin gone rogue! Ilya filed down his teeth and I’ve removed his claws, so he's perfectly harmless now. You see? Go ahead, pet him if you would like. We’ll be putting him to sleep soon so gawk at him while you can.” [Insert pout emoji here.]

I shake my head, ridding myself of the ridiculous thought.

Meanwhile, the French ex-gun offers her suggestion on how to proceed. "Let's just kill him and feed him to Mrs. Gerda's pigs, no?"

She pulls one of the modified chopsticks from her hair and hands it to me. The tip is actually a small blade and wicked sharp at the point. It nearly slices me open, due to the distraction that my lover currently presents.

It's almost as if she's shooting a shampoo commercial outside of a seedy bar washroom. I watch as Ilya’s hair tumbles down her slender back with just the shake of her head. Loose, velvety soft waves layer upon each other perfectly. I want to bury my hands in it. I want to thread my fingers through it and force her to her knees in front of me. In this low lighting, it's impossible to see the honey highlights in the natural chestnut color. But every part of this woman is known to me, and I so desperately want to make known to her the lust she inspires between my legs.

"Ok. I doubt he came alone though. He's not nearly good enough to try taking us both on by himself." I respond, swiftly piercing the soft spot behind Rudolph's ear lobe for a swift kill and minimal blood letting.

I wipe the chopstick off on his jacket. Meanwhile, Ilya has been checking the clips of both guns for ammo. She hands the side arm back to me and examines the ankle pistol a little longer.

I realize why when she spins it around her index finger, then shifts her grip and tosses upwards. When she snatches it from the air with the other hand, she appears impressed.

"Pas mal (not bad.) I'll keep zis one." The smaller firearm is slipped into the waistband of her cut offs. It must have a nice balanced feel to it for Ilya to like it that much. My angel has always enjoyed her trophies- weapons and tokens that belonged to her victims.

I hand Ilya the chopstick I had just pulled from Rudy’s brain.

"Anything you want, my love. But, uhm...you may want to wash that off before you..." I make a circular motion behind my head with my hand.

Ilya pauses in the process of absentmindedly wrapping her hair back up with the chopsticks.

Once it registers, she offers me a huffed noise of appreciation. The restroom door swings wide as she enters to wash fresh blood off of the murder weapon. Then she fixes her hair back with an impressive little one handed maneuver.

While she's doing that, I tell her the temporary plan.

"I'm going to take him to the deep freezer in the back. We'll deal with his body once we are all wrapped up tonight."

"Ok, baby." Ilya responds over her shoulder.

Hauling a body around is never easy. But I suppose I've done it enough to make it look like it is. I deadlift and carry the hitman into the kitchen entrance, a little further down the same hallway.

It takes a few minutes to unload the food from the wide freezer.

Rudy was not much taller than his beautiful cousin. The compact ex-assassin happens to fit perfectly into the makeshift cold casket. Soon, I have him sitting up and slumped over, cheek resting on a block of ice.

"You cool to chill here for a bit?" I ask Rudy, smirking.

It's no shock when my question goes unanswered, but I couldn't pass up the opportunity to say something punny. Even if a dead guy was the only one around to hear me.

"Oh come on mate, that was kind of funny." I admonish him, before shrugging and letting the freezer door fall back into place.

You know what else is kind of funny? How the padlock clicking into place sounds eerily similar to a gun being cocked.

At least I think it is until something cold, hard, and cylindrical in shape is pressed against the back of my head.

It’s a good thing I’m the sort that stays cool under pressure.

Ha. Get it? Cool.

Okay yeah maybe it's not that funny.

# Provocation

My open palms raise bit by bit. My brain does a rapid-fire calculation of who is on the other end of the gun. More family of Ilya's, I imagine. Maybe even Dino, or Jerissa. But how in the hell did they manage to sneak up on me?

And why haven't they pulled the trigger yet?

"Oh come on now." I lightly admonish the threat behind me. "The joke wasn't that bad, was it?"

"It was pretty awful.”

My muscles relax at the revelation of who I'm dealing with. I start to drop my raised hands, but freeze up entirely at the sensation of Ilya’s supple breasts pressing against my back.

The barrel of the gun slides around to my temple. The shorter assassin has to go up on her tip-toes to situate her lips against the shell of my ear. As she rises up, the two firm points of her nipples harden into concrete. I nearly shiver as they drag up either side of my spine.

Such a trivial gesture, has me instantly ready to bend her over and utterly destroy her tight hole. But that plan gets de-railed, because she whispers the magic word in my ear.

“Tag, Vexy.”

Ilya’s magical tongue does magical things with my ear. But her words send me rocketing backwards through time, About a decade or so.

Back in our training days, we sparred so much that fighting became second nature. Though for Ilya and I, it always had been. Our households were ruthless, and that was something we first bonded over.

As students, we weren't allowed to kill each other during combat practice. Instead, our trainers would make us stop just before landing a fatal blow. We would declare "Tag" instead, and continue fighting.

"Oh, I miss this game."

I can hear the smirk in Ilyasviel's voice as she steps back about an arm’s length, returning to her original position.

"It concerns me that you let me sneak up on you like this. Are we getting rusty in retirement, Reaper?"

"Are you wanting to get your ass kicked, little angel? Or would you like to skip it all and get down to business?"

Ilya chuckles, a low and seductive sound. "You’re so cute when you try to act all tough on me. But you’re going to have to earn zis fuck, Vexy. And you only have about 30 minutes left to put a gun inside of me. Otherwise, I promised to shoot you in ze head."

I shrug and glance at the Omega Seamaster timepiece decorating my left wrist. "I'll only need five. Ten at most."

"Says ze stud with the gun against her-"

I drop and spin, catching the angel’s shooting arm before she can lower it enough to shoot me.

Ha! Slow my ass.

Before she can get her bearings, I use the arm now in my grasp. She gets thrown over my shoulder in a fireman's carry.

The wrist holding the gun stays secure in my grip, though she’s doing her damnedest to regain sovereignty. I begin to twist the bone further than it should ever go.

Saying Ilya is tough is an understatement of epic proportions. She valiantly attempts to keep hold of her weapon, without uttering a whimper of her pain.

Finally, with a puff of air from her nostrils, she relents and drops it on the cooler.

"Hm." I contemplate out loud. "Wherever should I toss this poor damsel down and have my way with her?"

I didn't realize my mistake until it was too late.

If there is anything Ilya has over me, besides her marksmanship and feminine wiles, it's her flexibility. I should have made sure to secure both arms, not just the one with the weapon. That turned out to be problematic.

My love grabs the waistband of my board shorts, and scissors her legs apart. My one-armed grip, breaks. Rearing back with one free leg, she knees me in the stomach.

"Oomph!" The air dispels from my lungs, and I bend forward at the waist. Also, involuntarily.

She then uses my waistband and the leverage of my body mass to flip herself up and over my shoulder.

Or so I thought.

Instead of flipping over and landing behind me, she pulls some acrobatic, gymnastic, Black Widow shit I was not prepared for. Her legs go straight up in the air, making her perpendicular to the floor. Then she twists those curvy hips and throws a leg around my head and over my other shoulder.

Now she’s riding my wide shoulders upside down like a monkey bar at a playground.

Her momentum during the fancy move has me worried I'm about to fall backwards. I would crush her, and likely give us both head injuries.

With that in mind, I lean further forward to stand my ground. Thank the stars that Ilya is light-ish. Muscle definitely weighs more, and she has plenty of it. Luckily, I’ve packed enough muscle on my stocky frame to act as an anchor for Ilya’s lithe figure.

I had the audacity to have a little pride in myself for that, except...it turns on me in an instant. Holding my ground only makes it easier for her to lock her legs around my neck.

Her back slams into mine just as she completes the head lock. I'm jolted back up right, posture immaculate, while being choked by Ilya's powerful thighs.

I hear a short giggle come from behind me. Right where the back of Ilya’s head is currently bouncing against my ass cheeks.

I hope this gorgeous devil is enjoying herself. dangling from me like a 7 year old and restricting my airways. Having the time of her life, I'm sure.

I can’t even growl at her, damn it. There’s not enough oxygen to do it with.

One of the chopsticks in her hair pokes my right cheek. A sad sounding yelp tries exiting through my throat.

"Sorry, did you say something?" She asks, trying to more restrain her mirth.

You see, this is one of the few times I wish I didn't keep my nails clipped down to nothingness. I would find immense satisfaction scratching at her bare thighs and drawing blood. Maybe I would hear her make an equally sad, embarrassing sound.

The blunt nails I've relegated myself to, evoke no such reaction.

The pounding of my heart becomes louder, drowning out all other noises. I can feel it with my entire skull. Time turns sluggish as I struggle for breath. My head feels like it’s expanding. Or blowing up like a balloon about to get tied off.

I can't buck her, no matter how hard I try. Sinking down to my knees isn’t something I want to do, but it seems inevitable. My consciousness becomes a slippery thing, and proves too difficult to hang on to. Darkness bleeds into my peripherals, spilling ink into my blurring eyesight.

Gravity takes hold, and decides my next course of action for me. My knees start to give out, and I seek to land on them, but I’m also falling forwards. I prepare myself mentally for my face to embrace the tile beneath my feet. It does look very inviting at this moment, like a good place to take a mini nap.

Then Ilya uses the momentum of my faceplant to swing herself upright. My momentum shifts the opposite direction. We are somehow caught in a perfect balancing act. Now she's sitting on my shoulders, I find myself on my knees.

She takes my hair in one hand. Awareness sparks at the sharp tip of a knife, pricking through my Hawaiian shirt.

Dimly I register that she took the combat knife from me. Pickpocketed it while playing about my waist.

"Tag." Ilya says from above.

She hesitates only a moment before rearing back and driving it into my chest.

I try to cry out but I can't. The pain is sudden and floods my belly with apprehension. The pain and fear awakens my brain from its attempt at slumber with a blinding clarity.

The apprehension only lasts as long as it takes for the knife to pierce through several layers of skin. Dissipating when I hear the \*TINK\* of the steel collide with the metal plate over my heart.

Her attack has shifted her hold around my neck. Loosing it just enough for me to suck in a sliver of sweet oxygen. My vision clears, and my brain kick-starts enough to help me formulate a new tactic.

With my remaining strength, I rock back on my heels and throw myself backwards. My ass smarts from how hard I land on it. Ilya loses her balance her spine crashes into the front side of the freezer.

This does little but knock the breath from her, and force her leg lock to slacken just enough.

Instead of going for her legs to pry them apart, I reach up behind me. The goal I have in mind now, is to get a hold of the top half of that perfect body.

The pinned up chestnut locks make a grasping point for one of my hands. The nails of my other hand rake against her back until they find purchase on her blouse.

Using brute strength, I dip my face towards the ground, and throw Ilya over my head.

The fear of introducing her pretty face to the floor, convinces my love to do the smart thing. She tucks her head in and relinquishes her leg lock entirely.

Ilya flips over me, landing squarely on her back with a breathless gasp.

My blood follows the knife when I rip it out of my chest. A weak stream spurts across my love's heart-shaped face.

She managed to keep a tight hold on the knife whilst flying over me. I’m impressed she managed to not cut herself open.

And a tad disappointed.

For a second, I catch my breath and watch Ilya try to find hers. She lays between my stretched out legs with her eyes closed from the impact. From this upside down position, I'm able to view her from angles that I've never had the chance to.

I've been missing out.

All of the same stunning features that make up the angel below me, seem brand new from this Spidey POV. Seeing her from this angle is the closest I'll ever come to seeing her again for the first time. She so damn gorgeous, she takes the breath I've just recovered, and robs me of it once more.

Her feet are planted, knees bent. I greedily drink in the view of her cleavage, as her breasts begin to heave, finally procuring air. The gentle flare of her hips as they greet her well-toned thighs instills in me the urge to pile drive into her. With at least 9 inches of fleshy silicon.

Some of my blood landed on the flawless bow of her upper lip. I stare at the contrasting color palette, greedily sucking up the view.

Ilya’s eyes flutter open. Her hazel orbs seeks out my own. The upside down smirk she wears appears to be a perfect frown from my vantage point. But there's no mistaking the fire burning in her gaze. Nor the glow, which tells me how much fun she’s been having. That look is a melting pot of respect, desire, and adrenaline from the fight.

I only thought I was turned on. Then she holds me in that eye fucking, and proceeds to lick the drop of cherry-red blood off of her lip. Like it’s little more than spilled Kool-Aid, she follows up the sensual act with a noise of appreciation for the taste.

My taste.

My blood rushes in my ears for a very different reason this time. The tips of my fingers tingle with the desperation to touch her; to fill her.

To hurt her.

My mouth was bone dry from the heavy breathing. Like a faucet being twisted open, it begins to pool with moisture. Similar happenings occur between my thighs. The thighs she's currently residing between. Yet she’s yet to offer up any relief for the throbbing she’s instigated.

Before, while fighting, I was simmering beneath the surface. A fresh kill, and the skin-to-skin contact of my love will get me to that point every time.

Add some rough-housing and some blood play, and I'm ready to shred my skin to pieces.

I groan aloud at the desire pumping through my veins. Could she taste how badly I want her, in that small sample my blood? Was that single drop concentrated with the all-consuming lust she’s injected into my bloodstream?

“God, I want to fucking wreck you.” I admit to her, sounding very much like I’m in agony. “I want to stretch that pussy open with a 9mm, and fuck you raw with a bullet in the chamber until you flood everything up to my elbow in your cum.”

Her almond shaped eyes stay locked on mine, half lidded and morphing shades darker than their usually bright hazel. I get the impression that the exigency coursing through me is not unrequited. Especially not after that declaration.

But Ilya doesn’t jump up and ravish me. She doesn’t jump my bones even though both of us are very near that breaking point.

She just keeps looking at me with the temperature of the rising sun and says, “I don’t bottom for losers, Reaper. I want someone who can pin me down while they make it hurt.”

I grind my teeth.

“And you think I can’t force your submission?”

Ilya cocks her head, throwing fuel on my fire. “You’re down 2-0. If you can’t handle me then I'll just start fucking myself with that Glock over there. If you promise not to cry over your loss, I might even let you watch.”

Now I'm turned on. I'm either about to fuck the fight out of this little angel, or fight the fuck out of her. Whichever I choose to go through with will end in orgasms.

My nostrils flare and my eyes darken with the challenge. I am down 2-0 in our game of Tag. And I won’t let it end with a shut out on my part.

Decidedly, it's time to get serious about playing with my future meal.

With my left hand I snatch Ilyasviel by the throat, expecting her to try and strike with the knife when I do.

Sure enough, her arm swings back over her head. I pluck her wrist from the air, stopping the incoming attack. My superior strength comes in handy in moments like these.

I drag her up to a sitting position by her throat, pulling her spine flush against my chest. My back is propped up by the freezer, which I slam Ilya's wrist into. I have to do it a couple of times, twisting her arm behind her. She struggles profusely, digging at my hand damming up her air. Between the chokehold and her lack of leverage, she eventually gives. The combat knife clatters onto the floor.

As swiftly as I release her wrist, she's grabbed onto my hair. We had similar ideas, but mine ended up being more effective. She tugs at the short strands with little results. I, however, rip one of the chopsticks from her hair.

The chestnut locks fall down my chest, releasing the intoxicating scent of cherries dipped in rosewater. I don’t let it distract me, this time.

The weaponized Chinese utensil makes now aimed at her heart, I whisper, "Tag."

My breath gently brushes against her ear. A stark contrast to the violence looming over her.

Ilya stills in my hold. Her fingers go from clawing and pulling at my hair, to a gentle caress. Her legs are stretched out in front of her, flanked by my own. I feel a tremor run through her entire body when I utter that one syllable word.

She attempts to swallow past my hand, prompting me to loosen up on her neck. I hesitate, not wanting to let it go. I love the way it feels so fragile and important in my calloused fingers. The power is intoxicating.

Sensing the atmosphere has shifted, I give her enough space to breathe. Her hands drop to both of my thighs.

"Damn it, I love when you choke me." She sighs. The words are infused with so much appreciation, that I have to squeeze her throat again for good measure.

Her head tips back to rest on my shoulder, eyes soaking me in. Her hands start kneading my quadriceps. The way her thumbs fall, she is stimulating the muscles high at the apex of each leg.

Her upside down gaze is full of carnal passion and unhindered adoration.

“I nearly came just then. God Xella, I was so close…” The raw honesty of Ilya's words come out in a honey-sweet groan. A siren’s song, one of many she's used to capture me, both body and soul.

“…It’s something about your hand. I can feel ze callouses on your trigger finger, and your thumb. Pushing into my throat, sealing your control over my body…”

Liquid heat drips from my center like she's pressing a button only she knows about, hidden beneath my skin. As she works that erogenous zone like a stripper pole, I relax further, melting against the deep freezer.

Ilya slips my hold and turns to face me. She climbs in my lap, dipping her head in for a kiss. Our lips move together with practiced fluidity.

Her tongue parts my lips to dance with my own. They tango along the inside of my mouth, then hers, then back to mine with a languid passion.

The metal bars spearing each appendage make a barely perceptible clinking sound, every time they clash. It has always been one of my favorite sounds. The faster the clinking becomes, the closer we are to taking our clothes off.

Ilya bites my bottom lip, piercing it with her canines. The pain turns my nipples to pebbles, and copper floods my taste buds. I enjoy the metallic flavor of blood.

The dark angel does too. She seeks to enjoy it with me, sucking greedily on the puncture wounds.

One of her hands slip between the buttons of my over-the-top, brightly colored Hawaiian shirt. Less than a heart beat later, my nipple is rolled between her skilled digits. I groan into the open-mouthed, messy kiss we partake in. The spark of pleasure is now a lit fuse, burning straight to my core. I'm ready to ravage this woman.

My hands drop to her hips as I seek to grind them against my own. Her left arm brushes mine. My foggy mind realizes that hers is hanging towards the ground, which is odd. Ilya is definitely an “all hands on deck” kind of temptress.

Uhha.

The pieces fit together just in time to reach up and block her, again. The knife was nearly at my throat, which would have been yet another point to the Angel of Death. I wrench it from her grasp with ease.

"You never used that move in training." I growl against her lips.

"Ze instructor would have told my father I was dry humping ze enemy." She says, smiling into my kiss.

A noise of agreement hums from my throat. "That tracks.” My muscles tense and ready themselves. “Oh, by the way…make sure to flap those wings, little angel."

Ilya pulls back to look at me, eyebrows dipped low.

"What do you m-?"

The rest of her question is left behind, somewhere in the vicinity of where she had just been. Meanwhile, I send Ilya flying across the room.

She sails through the air like she has literal wings. Because, of course she does. Grace and balance Should be the translation of herbyedle names.

She demonstrates this further by landing on her feet. She does stumble back a step, a small victory, until she's caught by the opposite wall.

Ilyasviel huffs out in frustration, and blows a few unruly strands of hair from in front of her eyes. Both palms smack against the surface keeping her upright. She makes to push off of it, hooded eyes flashing a dangerous warning.

She lunges at me.

Or…well…she tries to.

Usually I would have rushed her first, but the look of surprise that crosses her features was worth the delay.

Stopped short of her lunge, Ilya almost seems frozen in time and space. Her arms are outstretched towards me and it’s a comical sight. Eyes wide, mouth agape, Ilya whips her head around in an attempt to understand why she can't get to me.

Her gaze lands on the same knife she had driven into my chest, now buried several inches deep in the wall behind her. The flowy section of her blouse, beneath her arms, has been skewered through. Ilya, tries once more to disconnect from the wall but the knife has her pinned there, by means of her adorable new top.

She's smart, and it doesn't take a genius to escape. Twisting and pulling against the blade, she tears her shirt open and steps out of it. The sight of her thin waist and toned tummy is a mind melting sight. Her standard black lace bra fits snugly around her ribs, pushing up and accentuating her high C cups.

A sensuous serpent tattoo runs from just above her left tit, down her rib cage to the cut in her left hip. It's a symbol of her family clan. Rudolpho has one tattooed under his right eye. He’s such an idiot. Nothing makes someone stick out in a crowd more than a face tattoo does. It’s kind of difficult to get the drop on your target, if everyone notices you’re there.

Even though she hates her family, that tattoo is her favorite, piece of art. It does well to follow her lovely curvature.

As badly as I want to enjoy the display of outright feminine sensuality happening, I can't. Not from afar.

By the time she's made it out of her top, she’s no less pinned than before. Now, I’m holding her there with a hand around her throat, my body pressed against hers, and the barrel of Rudy's gun digging between two of her ribs.

His ankle pistol- the one Ilya decided she liked enough to keep- remains on the freezer. I’ve had his sidearm tucked into the front of my shorts since we killed the son of a bitch.

My smile is smug and my eyes are sharp, but my mood is a perfect balance of competitive and playful. She catches on to it when I flick my tongue over both of her parted lips.

I've surprised her. Her mouth hangs open from shock, as much as to help her catch her breath. Then she matches my expression, lips curving upwards with good natured submission.

"Tag." I say into her mouth. Then I claim it with a ferocity befitting the state of desperation she's put me in.

Ilya's nails sink into my nape as she tries to bring us closer than is humanly possible.

When I separate our mouths so I can tip her face to the side and lavish kisses up her neck, she gives in to me.

"You’re it." The cease-fire is carried to my ears on a breathy sigh.

It's a term which means to give up, to take the loss and end the game. But if Ilya is unhappy about conceding to me, she doesn't sound it. Then again, the remorse could be in there. Hidden behind a fuckload of raw desire, perhaps?

"Fuck me, Reaper." She forces her plea past the firmness of my fingers. "You win, I submit."

"Are you sure, my love? This is just starting to get interesting." I murmur, dropping my eyes and letting them roam her half naked figure. "I can tell you still have plenty of fight in you."

My tongue travels the length of my lip. My piercing clicks against my teeth as I regard her "helpless" position.

"If I take ze fight out, will you put something else in me, baby? Because I can think of several things you should be filling me with." Ilya purrs the words at me with her eyes glued on my mouth.

A low rumbling builds in my chest as she enthralls me in her native tongue.

"I'm done playing hard to get. Maintenant, il est temps pour moi de céder, pendant que vous battez ma chatte jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit soumise. (Now it's time for me to relent, while you beat my pussy into submission.)"

At the raise of my eyebrow she adds, “You’ve only got 15 minutes left, Vexy. You don't want me to shoot you in that pretty head do you?”

Exhilaration

Looking to further encourage me, Ilya slips a hand down the front of my board shorts. My hands are full, so she runs her fingers through the slickness with absolutely no resistance on my part.

Her touch causes my lungs to expand, and the rest of me constricts with need. My fingers tighten around her throat, in turn.

My love's face is flushed from the exertion of the past few minutes. The choking helps, obviously. Heavy-lidded eyes glimmer up at me through fluttering lashes.

Her fingers glide over my throbbing clit. A geyser of arousal floods my briefs. Gods, she’s so good at this. At me. The slightest of touches and I’m turned into a literal fountain of desire.

Ilya’s index finger is the first to encounter the natural spring between my thighs. She bites down on her lip to stifle a moan of appreciation.

Two fingers enter my pussy so easily, it escapes my cognizance until she begins scissoring them inside of me. My lips fall apart and my head drops back until I'm gazing at the ceiling.

"Ilyasviel! Oh fuck...yes..." My tone dances from light surprise to raw praise.

A rush of ecstasy weakens my knees. I lean into her soft body, dropping my forehead to hers and stealing a kiss. Her nipples have tightened into sharp, miniature peaks. They jut out and try to scrape against each of my own. The luxurious material of her bra prevents the friction I'm craving like mad.

My instincts scream at me to rectify this. I’m a junkie for skin-to-skin and desperately seeking my fix. I need to feel them. Feel her.

I tear myself away from our kiss so I can make the demand.

"Take your bra off."

Her response is to smirk against my mouth and draw her fingers out of me.

“C-Christ!” She forces the curse from me with a last solid jerk of my clit.

My cunt seems rather reluctant to part with those miracle-working digits of hers. The disappointment has me wound so tight, I swear to God my whole body spasms when her hand disappears.

"Non. Je ne suis qu’un ange amoureux d’une faucheuse. (Not quite. I am but an angel in love with my reaper." She admits in a smoky tone.

“Yes well, your reaper has designs on your soul tonight, mon ange.” I have to gather my wits about me, and feel fortunate when my words come out with steady confidence.

As amazing as her hand feels, I'm not about to let her prove herself right and get me off first.

I use my chokehold to push her head back against the wall. The barrel of the suppressor, begins a lazy trail, from her wrist to her shoulder. The metal raises goosebumps on her skin as it cuts a path along her jugular. She bites her bottom lip when it eventually presses against her temple.

The \*clickCLICK\* of the gun being cocked is loud. Like cymbals being clapped together in the silence of our storage room.

"I said, take your bra off." The deadly serious turn my demeanor has taken does not go unnoticed.

Ilya shivers and withdraws her hand from my shorts. My hips tilt at the squeeze of my clit before it's completely extracted. She stares into my eyes while licking her fingers clean.

“Yum.” She mouths, and I nearly cum on the spot.

I watch her with a dark gaze and a river running down both thighs, as she arches her back from the wall. Reaching behind herself with one hand, the clasp gives way.

I rip it from her body the second I see the tension slacken. Her nipples stand erect in the cool air, and mine solidify further at the gorgeous pair of perky tits within kissing distance.

I lick my lips in anticipation.

"Now mine."

Ilya begins to do an unhurried unbuttoning of my gaudy staycation shirt. I entertain myself while I wait. Two of my fingers slip in between her lower lips, gathering up some evidence of her excitement. I raise them to her other lips, forcing them past her tongue so she will gag for me.

She gags so fucking pretty. Hypnotic eyes framing themselves with shiny droplets, throat muscles jumping with instinctive reluctance.

When I pull my fingers back, she refuses to part with them. Sucks them in and moistens them further without being prompted.

“You are being a very good girl for me, aren’t you?” I praise her for cleaning them spotless.

Then I hook the tips of my fingers behind her bottom teeth and tug her mouth open.

"How does it taste, baby?" I ask her when I slide the barrel of the gun in where my digits had just been. "Not half as good as it's going to feel when it’s parked in that wet pussy, I imagine."

Her moan is answer enough. Her lithe tongue snakes around the cylindrical intrusion.

She pushes my shirt over my shoulders. I have to transfer the gun from one hand to the other, to finish shucking it off.

My chest still has a trickle of blood running from the knife wound. Ilya’s gaze warms me thoroughly with her appraisal of my sculpted torso.

Her interest catches on the stab wound. She takes her index finger and swipes at the blood, drawing a crimson line to my nipple. Circling it with the warm, viscous liquid, and drawing unintelligible blood symbols on my breast. Almost like she’s preparing me for some sort of ritualistic sacrifice.

Warm fingertips push gently at my wrist, removing her mouth from around the firearm. When she dips her head and eliminates the distance between her mouth and my chest, it’s to wipe the blood art away with her tongue.

The purr of contentment that ripples through me is like the rumbling of a motorcycle engine. My knees nearly buckle when she seals my nipple in a vacuum of suction.

We let out a collective sigh when I pick her face up in my palm, shove her head back against the wall, body up to her, and press our bared flesh together. Now I can feel the cutting edge of diamond-hard nipples raking across my own, every time either one of us takes a breath.

The tip of the gun finds the roof of her mouth. She stops moving entirely, hands coming to rest on my hips. Twin hazel flames watch me with intense focus. The Angel of Death is scared of nothing, and waits patiently for my next move with a loaded pistol aimed at her brain.

"Hands behind your head until I say otherwise." I demand finger caressing the trigger.

She does as I ask, picking up her mane of loose curls off of her shoulders. She bunches it up behind her head and leans against the wall, pinning both in place.

How is it that Ilya manages to do even the smallest of tasks with ungodly amounts of sexuality pouring from her? My core clenches at the feminine grace of her every action, and she’s just being practical!

Her heated gaze makes silent and erotic promises to me, as it stays faithfully locked into mine.

"Like zis, monsieur?"

"Aye. You are an absolute pleasure to behold, mon amour." These whispered words of worship are the truth of who she is to me.

I prop myself against the wall with one hand and begin to drag the gun's tip down her clavicle. The hole at the end of the suppressor fits perfectly around the distended tips of her breasts. I take turns stuffing each one into the hole at the end of the gun. Twisting my wrist to provide delicious friction from the barrel spinning around the sensitive flesh.

"Fuck, Vexy. Zat feels." moans out her praise, eyes fluttering closed and open again.

"You are incredible." I murmur my praise into her ear. My lips brush the shell of it, teasing another shiver from her.

"You're so responsive. So eager. Your nipples seem so desperate to immerse themselves in this Glock. Almost as much as I want to immerse myself in of you."

My baby loves the erotic caress of her late cousin's sidearm. It turns her on in ways she can only vocalize through animalistic moaning.

The owner of this gun has taken countless lives with it, and now lies dead mere meters away. But the weapon has become sentient, and remains bloodthirsty. With the safety disengaged and the firing pin cocked back, it's anxious to put a hole in something. I doubt it cares what that something ends up being.

"Or who." My macabre mind supplies the dark thought with an ease that is borderline psychotic.

One mistake and I could be splattering wet, sticky insides of my love, all over the dingy white walls.

"But if you do it right, it won't be the walls that end up wet and sticky mess." I think to myself.

I swear my train of thought is conducted by a horny teenager 50% of the time. And yet, 100% of the time, I still choose to jump on board and ride it off the rails.

Leaning back, I remove the cool metal from her breast. Ilya's gaze is locked on me. Her tits heave with the frustration of her current restraint. The sight of them moving in perfect harmony for me is so tantalizing, that I begin to slap them both with my free hand.

Startled, Ilya lets out a high-pitched "Ah" before she clamps down on her lip. Biceps flexing, she manages to keep her hands where I told her.

"Good girl." I smirk.

Another 4 slaps in succession, focusing on one breast and then the other. The jiggling of each is short and sweet, but not as gratifying as the rosy flush brought to the surface of her creamy skin.

Ilya whimpers on the last one. That beautiful erotic melody makes me rock hard. I know it so well I hear it in my sleep. This whimper is unique, it's not born of pain. This wordless declaration lets anyone within hearing range know that Ilyasviel Cadieux is ready to get fucked.

"What is it, baby?" I play ignorant, lightly tapping one nipple with the gun.

As she responds, I tease a feather-light trail with the metal down her body. Navigating through the dip in her skin, between the softly carved-out muscles of her abdomen.

"Evexella." She breathes out. “I need you…”

The button of her jean shorts doesn't stand a chance against the ferocity of my tug. It pops off, bouncing and rolling across the floor with a \*TINKtinktink.\*

A rough jerk at the zipper and each side of her shorts fall open like flower petals in bloom. They reveal a small triangle of matching, sheer black panties.

I pull the waistband of the skimpy material towards me with a hooked finger. With a smirk and a tilt of my head, I blow a cold gust of air down into her soaked underwear.

The opposing contrast of the cool breeze against her overheated sex teases her with short-lived relief.

It propels her lower back off of the wall, hips jutting towards me.

“Plus de. (More.)” She demands.

“Ah, pas si vote, mon ange. (Not so fast, my angel.) There’s a reason I haven’t touched you yet. Are we forgetting?” I admonish her lightly, tapping the gun against my temple.

The cloud of lust clears just long enough for the answer to come to her.

A knowing grin lifts at her pouted lips, “Nous saignons. Nous baisons.”

“That’s right, baby.” I reward her correct answer with a genuine smile. “And one of us hasn’t shed a drop of blood. Not yet, anyway.”

The black hole of my spirit fills with and adoration for this woman. She’s the only thing that can make me feel complete. I’ve sold my soul for her, and I would do it over and over again. Ilya is my other half, my perfect counterpart. We share everything, including our flaws and the sins that haunt us.

I love that Ilya is not a red roses and chocolate kind of girl. She would rather get fucked in a rose bush. Roll around together with the thorns pricking and tearing at us. She wants the copper taste of blood to mix with chocolate on her taste buds. She would beg me to coat my strap with the slickness spilled from my veins, before filling her with it. Time and time again.

And by the gods…I want it all just as badly.

The desire to see that gorgeous crimson swallow up the tip of my blade is…powerful. It crashes through me like a wrecking ball.

In a flash, the gun disappears behind me. I tuck it into the waistband of my shorts for the time being. I won’t be needing it for the next few minutes.

When I crave Ilya’s blood, it gives me a high similar to when I end a life. Nothing else in this entire world does it for me like that. Not drugs, alcohol, cliff diving, high stakes gambling.

Most people with addiction turn into someone they don’t recognize. Some say it’s possession, they even call themselves monsters. With us, it’s a revealing of our truest natures. It’s pulling back the masks we wear every single day.

With her hands behind her head and leaning back against the wall, Ilya appears more relaxed than if she were floating out in the waves, waiting for a decent swell.

That doesn’t change when I reach over and jerk the knife out of the wall, and her shirt falls limp to the floor.

The untainted blade almost shines too brightly in the shitty lighting. It mirrors the serpent tattoo when I glide the flat edge up Ilya’s ribcage.

All along the body of the winding creature are small scars. They cross through it at random intervals. Little raised ridges of white flesh marring the beautiful work of art with my own version of it.

My personal favorite is the scar that crosses through the narrow body symbolic serpent, right behind its hooded head. After killing her father and brother, it took months of healing before we could make love again properly.

I had killed the leader of the Cadieux clan, otherwise known as the Serpents. It gave me the idea of using Ilyasviel’s family mark for our shared obsession. Watching her skin split open beneath my favorite kunai is the most entrancing sight in the world.

Oh if Jean could see what his daughter willingly offers an Archer like me. I hope he’s tumbling in his grave like a clothes dryer.

This time, I slide it smoothly across the very end of the serpent, cutting off its tail. The tattoo ends just below her hip bone, at the V of her abdomen.

Ilyasviel doesn’t whimper, she does gasp or grit her teeth. The sharp point sinks at least a centimeter or 2 deep. Thick droplets of her life force expand from within, quenching the knife’s thirst before gravity can take hold.

The guttural moan my actions provoke, make me question whether or not my love just hit her peak.

I drop my hands to my side, staring with unyielding focus. If I am an artist, and her blood is my medium…then watching her blood fall down her smooth, pale skin is like watching my masterpiece paint itself.

If I looked into her eyes I would know. I can’t look away from the aesthetic of her blood running over her hip bone and down towards her underwear, long enough to check if she had.

“C’est magnifique. (So beautiful.)” I breathe, sliding the knife between her panties and skin.

The trail of blood meets with the blade at the apex of her pelvic bone. I decide to pave the way for the ruby river by getting the unnecessary undergarment out of its way.

Ilya sharply inhales when I rub against her clit with the flat side of the lubricated weapon. I navigate carefully, knowing I've got it situated just right when I hear the metal \*Clink\* against her piercing.

I love that noise, that miniscule hint at her losing control. So, I turn the blade at a slight angle and begin to work it against her swollen nub.

She’s so slick. From the blood of her own arousal, I can’t say for sure because I can’t see…yet.

I must hit that pleasure button with just the right pressure because she gasps with her entire body this time.

Her hips buck in my direction like they mean to do me damage. Neither of us seem the least bit concerned about whether or not she's about to get herself cut in such a sensitive spot.

I have a feeling she would love it all the more, anyway. She was masochistic enough to get a triangle piercing. I’m sure she wouldn’t back down from a little paper cut.

“So good. So fucking good, Vexy.” My angel groans out, lightly thrusting her hips towards the weapon.

Something ravenous and powerful thrashes against my ribcage, desperate to consume. It’s hard to tell the monster I keep locked up in there, from the equally vicious beat of my heart.

They share a single goal. To join with the woman in front of me. To touch her; to consume her. Only she could ever make me feel like this. Only with Ilya, can I open the cage inside of me, and let the demons out to claim their most prized possession.

“Claim her!” They cry out. The voices fill my mind with their demands. My innermost cravings.

“Break her. Taste her. Take her. Ravage her. Unmake her.”

Sometimes I fear I cannot control the urges, but then I realize who I'm dealing with.

I twist until the sharp edge faces me and cut through the fine material. Like slicing butter with a warm knife, the underwear splits wide open straight down the middle.

My hands fall limp to my sides. My eyes are locked on the work of art creating itself.

I know, even without looking at her, exactly what she wants next. Lean muscles trembling beneath her skin. Slender body writhing against the wall. Dead giveaways, when it comes to Ilya.

I know my girl.

The uninterrupted flow of her blood reaches her hood piercing, having blazed its own path to glory. My photographic mind begins shuttering the memories of Ilya’s beautiful, blood-slicked clit. My mouth parts in reverence. I’m ready to taste her.

You know what to do then, don’t you?

My tongue grazes my lips in anticipation. My permission comes out in a thick whisper.

“You may move your hands.”

The words have hardly rolled off of my tongue when Ilyasviel does move. With terrifying speed.

She grabs me by the hair on my head and shoves me to my knees with a soft crunch of cartilage from each. I allow the knife to slip from my fingers and clatter to the ground. It’s still bouncing on the cold concrete as she drags me to her by the back of my neck.

My tongue seems to sizzle as it makes contact with her pussy. I can’t tell if it’s my tongue or her swollen cunt that’s burning the hottest. Any fucks I gave about figuring that out melted away as soon as I tasted her.

That sweet and tangy arousal with coppery syrup drizzled across it. It’s like a demented ice cream sundae and it is my favorite fucking treat in the entire god damn world.

I take my time at first, licking her like an ice cream cone from top to bottom, even going so far as to trace the blood back to its source.

Ilya stares down at me, biting a hole through her bottom lip. The deep brown in her irises have eaten up the green, leaving them bottomless and esurient.

“Mange moi (Eat me.) Please. Please amour.”

I want to comment on how exquisite she tastes. How I wish to continue savoring her. But those fathomless eyes reflect so much raw need that I cannot refuse my lover’s pleading.

Her shorts are worked down to her ankles. The satin panties are ripped off, leaving red marks from where they resisted around her hips.

Then I can pull one of her legs up over my shoulder, and trap her clit in my mouth with intense suction.

Ilya’s hips buck and her short cry is muffled by her own closed fist. I alternate my pressure and my ministrations. Pulling her into my mouth with slow but strong draws, then releasing so I can work both of our piercings over the sensitive flesh in quick flicks. That sensitive bit of flesh seems to swell a fraction more, every time suck it back in.

Mon ange is approaching her release so quickly, she's practically climbing up the wall she leans against. I can't be sure if it's a physical display of her ascent to cloud 9, or an attempt to stave it off by putting space between my tongue and her cunt.

I certainly don't want the latter to be true, so I take away her leverage.

I snatch up her other leg, dipping my shoulder beneath it so she's no longer able to climb a damn thing.

Ilya whimpers in pleasure as I redouble my efforts. Long nails dig into my scalp, fingers finding purchase in my hair and holding on for dear life.

“Vexy, oh my God baby. Oh my God. Just like zat. Fuck yes, yes…”

The beautiful French monologue deteriorates into whimpering until I hit a particularly hot spot.

Ilya’s legs jerk and her feet hit flat on my back. Once again, she tries to escape the pleasure by using her new foothold. I don't think it's intentional when she tries to use me as a step-ladder, because I can feel her toes curl up against both shoulder blades.

“Stop trying to escape.” I snap up at her, in between breaths.

may sound a touch annoyed, but the truth is I’m about to cream my shorts. The idea that Ilya can’t even wall-sit through some cunnilingus right now means she’s overwhelmed by the pleasure I’m giving her already. She's afraid the orgasm is going to swallow her up.

It may seem silly that this stone-cold killer riding my face is scared of an orgasm. But the truth of the matter is that we were trained to sustain every type of pain. Pleasure is a whole other matter entirely. One they did not teach us about in CKU.

We may have taken matters into our own hands, back then. After hours and when the school was busy sleeping, the heiresses of rivaling clans decided to teach each other a little bit about sexual torture methods.

That was a long time ago. It's been a while since we've had the adrenaline of a fight and fresh kill pumping through our veins.

Nothing makes me want to fuck harder, than a soul reaping does. Ilya is just as horny as I am. She's been ready to go since before she kicked her cousin's ass through that door. But I’m willing to bet it was when she watched me haul away his body, that really did it for her. She’s been a dripping mess since I shoved a chopstick into his brain.

I fucking love this woman. I would scream it for the world to hear if I wasn’t face deep in this delicious cunt of hers.

“Unless you stop eating my pussy like you wrote ze schematics for it, I can’t exactly help it!” She snaps back at me, clearly irritated at herself for trying to wriggle from my mouth.

“Oh fuuuck, Evexella! What ze fuck are yo-you doing to m-ah! Ah, Oui!” Her reply started out a whine between clenched teeth. It ends with her reflexively catapulting herself off of me, back sliding up the wall.

“Must I always restrain this girl?” I wonder as I wrap my arms around her thighs.

I haul her back down into a sitting position on my shoulders. Holding her there with force, my mouth never falters in its rhythm.

“Tongue, Xella! Si vous plait, I want it inside of me. Now!”

Ilya looks wild, her hair messy and falling around her shoulders. She shoves it all back by threading her fingers through the hair on the top of her head. She continues to hold it back as she tilts her head down to implore me with glassy eyes. Her chest heaves, accentuating the curvature of her full tits.

I take one last suck on her clitoris as hard as I can, then scrape my teeth over the silky button. My blaze with a passion for her that can not be manufactured or replicated. Ilyasviel mirrors the sentiment. Until they roll back in her head, and she falls back against the wall.

I don’t just stiffen my tongue and drive it into her. I rise to my feet as well, supporting her lower back so that she stays riding my face.

From memory, I walk us to the freezer her cousin’s body is entombed in. Ilya hangs on to my shoulders and neck with claws. Praises pour from her mouth the entire time my tongue explores her depths.

My quadriceps bump against the freezer’s front wall, and I remain standing as I work my girl to the edge, before abruptly stopping to lay her down.

Now a string of colorful French curses spills forth. Having her orgasm denied is a touchy subject for my love.

She displays her displeasure with a one-handed chokehold, bringing my face down to meet hers.

“I was about to come in your mouth.” She growls in absolute fury. “Did you have a fucking stroke, or do you just have a death wish? Because I have no problem fucking your dead body after I murder you, espèce de trou du cul inconsidéré!”

She punctuates her name-calling with a slap to my face so hard, I see white.

“Do it again.” I goad her with a smirk.

I fucking love it when she puts her hands on me like that. But I have no time for her complaints because I am under a time limit.

While she’s threatening me, I’m using her distracted state of mind to perform a quick weapons alteration behind my back. I quickly and quietly slipped the deadman’s silencer from my pocket, to the deadman’s gun resting in the back of my shorts.

She slaps me again, so hard my tooth cuts my lip open. This time, the smile I give her is my best rendition of a shark’s grin. Blood drips down my chin. Her eyes shift from furious to weary and all the more turned on for it.

“My turn.” My voice is so chilling, she tries to shiver.

I’ve caught her by her throat before the shiver can reach her toes.

I push her down until her naked back hits the freezer with some force. My frame is wedged between her open legs and I use my shoulders to force them further apart as I lean over her. The tip of the suppressor is placed on the center of her forehead.

The lump in her throat tries to bob up and down but struggles to do so. I feel it all happening in my palm. It feels like all of the power in the universe is in my grasp. Nothing could be better than this.

Sometimes I think about killing us both when moments like these occur. Why not, right? We could go out our way, on top of the world, having everything we’ve ever wanted. We could do it together. No one else would get the chance to write our ending for us. We wouldn’t have to live without each other because someone finally got the drop on one of us.

I know if I told Ilya I wanted to do it, right fucking now…she would say yes. As long as we walked into hell hand in hand. Together.

\*BOOM\*

That’s all it would take.

But I’m not going to die having left my angel’s newfound desire unfulfilled. Or leave her pussy unfilled, I should say.

The round suppressor strokes her cheek with the same sweet touch I would. It kisses her lips for me, even getting a little tongue action out of her. It trails the valley of her breasts and tickles lightly over her belly button.

The amount of arousal it meets when I reach her sex is ungodly. I can see the strong pulse of her racing heart in her clit. Like all her blood rushed to that area and is steadily trying to push against the metal tip like it’s the button that brings pleasure. I toy with that pretty pink flesh, rubbing it with Rudy’s gun until it's rosy and stiff. Ilya's heels dig into my back.

“Vex!” My name sounds strangled, caught in my tightening grip of steel.

Ilya claws at my wrist. Belatedly, I notice I've been tightening it in my lecherous haze. I'm lost to the darkest parts of my mind, focused on her body's every reaction to her favored weapon. It's almost like Ilya has two lovers that every part of her is responsive to. Me, and her beloved firearms. Now she has us both at once, and her body is lighting up beneath our caress.

I position the suppressor at her entrance and watch in wonder as her pussy tries to desperately swallow up the tip. I won't let it, yet.

The sight makes me keenly aware of just how excited I've become. I'm dripping down my thighs, and throbbing at their apex with torturous insistence. My nipples are aching with their constriction. They sit tall on my otherwise flat chest, displaying to the world just how turned on I am by the act of shoving a loaded gun inside of my one and only love. Her reaction could very well make me come without her laying a hand on me.

I glance up at Ilya and notice her lovely face is red, eyes burning holes through me. I realize she's mouthing something now, but doesn't have the air to give it life.

Her lips form a single word over and over, and I realize with disappointment that it's not my name.

Fighting the urge to discipline her for my unreasonable expectation, I relinquish her oxygen into her grateful lungs. The telltale reddening of finger outlines warns of their impending shift into bruises, come tomorrow.

It pleases me. Ilya won’t just have my fingerprints on her, but an imprint of my whole hand darkening her skin like a tattoo proclaiming my ownership.

Fear flashes through me as she coughs, eyes watering. Light mascara trails run down her flushed cheeks. Her fingers scrabble at my wrist faster. They rake down my forearm and create delicious pain gathering my skin beneath dark-painted nails.

Have I truly hurt her? Is she angry at my lack of awareness? I should be paying more attention. What if I had killed her?

Her repeated word starts gaining strength as I look into the dense forestry of her irises.

“What is it that has you begging, my love?” I question, at the same time her tightness tries grabbing ahold of the pistol once more.

“P-please. Please. Please. Please.”

My mouth goes dry, confusion laced with fear soaking up the moisture within. Does she want me to stop? Stop hurting her?

“Please what?” I croak out, gripping the gun in a suddenly sweaty palm. “You need me to stop?”

Her head twists side to side so violently I fear she may strain it.

“Please, put it all ze way in.” She manages. I realize the tears are flowing harder than before, but I’m not choking her as I was. “I n-need to know.” She finishes through clenched teeth.

“Know what, Ilyasviel?” I prod quietly, eyebrows coming together.

Her eyes are clear, and they tear through the darkness I’ve shrouded myself with. Her words cut clean through it all and hit me in my most vital organ with perfect accuracy.

“What it felt like. I need to know what it feels like to have m-my love, aim a gun at your h-heart.”

I stare at her in absolute awe. Entirely dumbfounded at this unexpected revelation.

“Baby…” I whisper. “You know that this could never count as an apology for what you did to me that night.”

Ilya's breath hitches, and resignation settles in her watery eyes. “I know what I did was unforgiva-“

“Ilyasviel Cadieux.” I cut her off with a hard tone and an even harder inch of the 9mm suppressor. “I am not putting your life at risk for you to redeem yourself over something you never need to apologize for. My father told me the truth, lucky for me. Seeing as how you've been too busy beating yourself up over it to let me know.”

I lean over to put my face in hers, pushing the gun further into her slick entrance at the same time. “This is not your apology. This is my thank you. You saved my life. Now I'm about to fuck you with this gun because I can't think of anything that could possibly turn me on more, or make you come harder. I want to watch you climax all over the loaded pistol that belonged to your traitorous cousin.

“I want them all to turn over in their graves for what they did to us, baby. I hope whatever circle of hell they landed in, offers a front-row seat for them to watch me defile the Serpent Clan’s heiress.”

Ilya’s eyes roll back as I sink the rest of the silencer barrel into her welcoming cunt. “Baise-moi stupidement avec, alors. (Fuck me stupid with it, then.)” She demands of me.

“That is my intention, little angel.”

The loaded gun sinks into her depths and Ilya gasps with pure, concentrated pleasure. I pump into her slowly a few times, murmuring for her to keep her eyes on me and enforcing it with a squeeze of my fingers.

As my pace picks up, my hand slides from her throat, down her chest. I tug at her nipples and slap her tits in time with each thrust of the barrel burrowing deeper inside of her.

“’Xella!” Ilya cries, scrambling backwards until she’s propped up with her spine pressed against the wall. “Fuck me. Fuck me harder.”

I fuck her harder and harder, closing the distance between our bodies by drawing her into me by the back of her neck. I’m wedged between those perfect thighs, forehead against hers, and rubbing up against the handle of the gun and my own hand.

The friction feels like magic against my aching sex but I use every trick I know to stay focused on Ilya’s building release. Even though my eyes are glazing over with the ecstasy coursing through my veins.

I can see Ilya’s orgasm building with each and every insertion. The gun is as deep as the barrel now, the silencer completely buried within her. Her usually vocal mouth is clamped closed with teeth sunk deep into her bottom lip. Her eyes betray the heights she’s climbing, and the pressure mounting inside of me is ready to explode with her.

I’m driving into her forcefully and with my whole body. The deep freezer begins to bang against the wall with a rhythmic clattering. Only then do I remember there are people in this building who could be drawn to us by the noise.

The thought comes and goes without sticking. I barely register how much of a shit I don’t give if our friends find us fucking on our deep freezer.

Until we’re interrupted, that is.

“Well…” a deep voice resounds from behind me.

My hips and hand grind to a halt. My immediate reaction is not of weariness, but of pride. I mean come on, being busted out while banging the most gorgeous girl in the world is hardly embarrassing.

Unfortunately, the voice I had half expected to hear, speaks words I wasn’t expecting at all.

“This isn’t exactly how I hoped to find you both. But I can’t say I mind the compromising position. It will be much easier killing you both while you’re…otherwise engaged.”

## Domination

Dino never really stood a chance.

It’s not as if he knew of the ire inspired in my love when she had her climax stripped from her. Especially for a second time.

Had he been here a few minutes ago, he would have learned of it firsthand. It might have saved his life. Unfortunately for him, he arrived a touch too late.

“Are you fucking kidding me right now?” Ilya screams in response to my motionless form. “Dino, get ze fuck out. Now!”

“Did you not hear a word I said?” Dino replies evenly. “Reaper, why don’t you take your fingers out of your girlfriend so she can hear me properly?”

“Grand idea.” I murmur with a smirk.

The traitor amongst us has just sealed his fate with his words.

He stands directly behind me, in the direction of the doorway, and therefore cannot see exactly what I’m doing to her. Unfortunately, that means I’m also blocking Ilya’s view of him, by standing between her legs. With the murderous intent in Ilyasviel’s eyes, I know only two things.

Ilya wants a gun, and I want to get the fuck out of the way.

I watch as Ilya wraps her fingers around the ankle pistol she had claimed from her late cousin. Almost as if it had been waiting for this moment since I wrested it from her grip earlier.

Then I hear our second traitor walk in, and by the sound of it, both have guns at their disposal. Of course they do.

“Why am I not surprised to see you both alive and well and fucking on top of our deep freezer?” Jerissa remarks, her tone carrying an unusual chill to it. “I guess we found the perfect way to put an end to the lovebirds.”

I begin to chuckle. Silently at first but it turns into full-blown laughter, my head falling back. Now I know exactly where they both stand.

“Is there something funny about having two guns pointed at your back, Reaper?” Dino says with a stiffness that betrays his lack of confidence.

My head tips forward again, and I give Ilya her silent cues.

“It’s not the first time Dino.” I tell him. “And it won’t be the last.”

Ilya and I move with the type of shadowy grace belying our former profession. But we also do so with the perfect coordination and teamwork that comes from our bond as lovers.

All it takes is a single, fluid movement from each of us.

I duck and spin to my left, sliding the sidearm from Ilya’s depths and firing two shots into Dino’s chest.

Ilya slides to her left, throwing her body parallel to the freezer and zinging a 9mm between Jerissa’s round, chocolate eyes.

Jerissa and Dino got off a round each in the flurry of movement. I’m not sure who shot where though.

A quick mental inventory tells me I’m unharmed. A bullet meant for one of us is now buried in the wall where Ilya’s back had just been. Our two imposter friends lay sprawled amongst pools of their own blood. Dino is slumped against the wall, his neck at an awkward angle. Jerissa lies across his stretched-out legs, a pile of limbs, and bloodied jet-black curls.

“Fils de pute. (Son of a bitch.)”

I hear Ilya’s whispered curse, and it draws up to her prone form. Instead of meeting her shining hazel eyes and seeing them gleam with the adrenaline of the kill, I see an anguished expression.

Ilya is looking down the length of her body. Both of her hands are squeezing tight around her upper thigh. Blood spills down the front of the freezer. In the back of my mind I find it all morbidly ironic, because the sight makes my own blood freeze in my veins.

“Ilya…” I breathe her name out, rising up from where I had dropped to one knee.

“It’s okay, my love. I’m fine.” She attempts to reassure me, but the grimace on her face tells its own story.

“You are indeed the finest of all the fine beauties on this Earth. However, if we are talking about your general well-being, I’d say fine is on the opposite end of having a bullet inside of you. Which you, love of mine, just so happen to have.”

I try to lighten the moment with some of my usual flirty banter. It's a poor attempt at disguising my dread.

Ilya brushes it off with a wave of her hand. “I have a bullet hole in me, not a bullet. It didn't hit any of my major arteries, it’s just a flesh wound. I’ve had worse, Evexella. I've given you worse.” She quips, throwing me a playful look.

It twists into a grimace as she tries to shift her weight.

With a practiced eye, I examine the so-called “flesh wound.” The bleeding is slowing but she’s lost a good amount of it already. Ilya was indeed correct; the bullet has knocked a chunk out of her, but now appears to be a permanent fixture of the storage room wall.

“Going to have to do some renovating.” I muse, while turning my back to Ilya.

As I begin to unbuckle Dino’s belt, Ilya snorts out a puff of air behind me.

“So you’re only into men when they’re dead, huh? That makes so much sense.”

I rip the belt from around the Guido’s waist with a hard jerk. His body falls sideways, face slamming into the floor. I shrug and make my way back to the only body in here that I give a shit about.

Ilya doesn’t even whimper when I adjust the belt above the bullet hole and tighten it to help staunch the flow of blood.

“We need to get you stitched up.” I tell her, trying to keep my eyes on her current predicament.

Even though the steady stream of crimson clearly needs tending to, my concentration is an elusive thing. The gloriously nude figure sprawled out on the deep freezer is a tempting sight. The blood streaking her skin and adding color to the white and gray backdrop, entrances my dark nature.

“I'm not leaving this room until I get my orgasm,” Ilya speaks with finality, eyes flashing. “Stitch it for me.”

“Hm.” I regard my love and our situation, wanting nothing more than to give her that orgasm and then some. But with the amount of blood coming from the entry and exit holes, that would be difficult and time-consuming. Best done by a professional.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, love. We have a first aid kit in the back of the bar but it doesn’t come with what we would need. I think we should probably get you to-“

“Evexella…” Ilya cuts me off. The icy tone she’s using brooks no argument. It also raises the hairs on the back of my neck, a trustworthy warning of imminent danger. “I am bleeding. I am horny.”

Ilya jerks me closer to her with two fingers hooked into my waistband. I have no shirt for her to get ahold of, but she wants to put her face in mine. So, she grabs on to the only thing she can, to bring me to her level.

Around my neck sits a silver serpentine chain. Diamonds accent the jewelry and a wolf-head, Thors Hammer pendant rests at the base of my throat.

It was a birthday present from Ilya the first year after we became a thing. She claimed it to be authentic Viking artwork. Since the day she clasped it on me herself, I’ve never taken it off. It was only ever removed once, without my permission. I was on the table and under the knife, fighting for my life, and had no choice in the matter.

That chain is what my angel uses to bend me over the deep freezer until our faces are centimeters apart.

“Nous saignons, nous baisons.” She breathes against my lips. Her words provide fuel to my already overactive demons. “So figure out a way to keep me alive, now. Because I want you to fuck me. Like, right now.”

I growl against those commanding lips, before stealing a kiss. Her words ignite an inferno beneath my skin. Even the lip lock itself is on fire. Every touch of her tongue fans the flames of my white-hot arousal.

Which gives me an idea.

I break away, tugging at her lip with my teeth. I get the most beautiful whine from her, for it.

I return to the fallen traitor. This time, I’m searching his pockets.

“Bingo.” I smirk, tossing my find in the air and catching it.

Ilya tilts her head, eyes narrowing in curiosity.

Then I stroll to the spot on the ground, occupied by the abandoned combat knife.

“You don’t mind a little pain, do you beautiful?” I ask over my shoulder, scooping up the weapon and her crumpled blouse.

My question is 100% rhetorical and mostly made up of sarcasm. Ilya answers anyway, bending her good leg at the knee and planting her foot flat on the freezer. Propped up on her elbows, I can feel her gaze all over my backside like the touch of her fingers.

When I turn back to her, I’m looking down the length of her body. My head swims with the desirous position she now lies in. Her lovely breasts stand perky and full, nipples pointed towards the ceiling. Despite the bleeding holes in her leg, my eyes snag on her chest.

“You know exactly how I feel about pain.” My dangerous little doll uses a sultry tone to draw me back to her. Simultaneously daring me to try her.

I step up to the end of the freezer and grab her good leg behind the knee. She continues to heat me with her gaze while I spread her wide open.

“Yay, or nay?” I ask with a raised eyebrow, holding up both of the tools I've just gathered.

Ilya drags her gaze from my chest. Her eyes take in the knife, and slide over to Dino’s trusty Zippo lighter. He used to flick open the lid incessantly as a nervous habit.

“Yay.” My love responds with a boldness I would not expect from any other.

I unleash a wicked little smile, tossing her Zippo. The knife twirls in my hand and I hum to myself as I locate a specific crate stacked about a meter from the freezer.

I drive the knife into the top of it. When I lift it back up, the top comes away to reveal a shipment of Absolute Vodka.

I grab a clear bottle with bold, blue letters and toss it upwards in triumph. It flips end over end before I deftly snag it from the air.

“You’re better than Andy. Why don't you ever tend ze bar?” Ilya teases.

“Because I like to save my best tricks to show off for you. Especially when I’m doing sketchy first aid treatment in the back room of a bar.” I grin, popping the top.

I offer Ilya a swig, and she takes two, before passing it back to me. I soak a part of her shirt in the vodka. The knife gets its share of the alcohol as well, after I’ve wiped it off on a clean looking spot of my shorts. Then I gulp some down. Carefully, I pull my love towards me until her ass rests on the edge of the bulky appliance.

Vodka waterfalls down both sides of Ilya’s thigh, cleansing it and washing away most of the carnage. A hiss under her breath is the only reaction shown by the elite assassin.

The Vodka mixes with the crimson, thinning it to the consistency of watercolors. Gravity captures the combination. Washed-out blood ends up painting the floor and my bare feet with splashes of rose-tinted pink. Then I wipe the wounds with the sterilized shirt.

“Would you like a design or just a patch job?”

My question is completely serious. Ilya and I have no shortage of scars between us. It comes with the territory.

“Just get it done.” She replies, flipping open the lighter and igniting it with one hand. She looks at me through the steady flame and adds, “I should tell you how turned on I am by the thought of you making me cum all over that recently fired gun. Would that convince you to stop fucking around and just get to ze fucking?”

I swallow hard, needing no further encouragement than that. I have to focus on stopping the bleeding first, but it’s a struggle. I’m wrestling with my desire to take her hard and fast while she bleeds all over us both.

The small flame tries to engulf the knife, but it is not enough to do so. I have to hold the weapon steady in order to heat the metal to the right temperature. Ilya remains propped up on one elbow, holding the torch out for me with her other hand.

We catch each other's eyes while I slowly twist the knife back an forth. The fire reflects in her razor-sharp, hazel irises. The magnetic pull of her is irresistible. I study the sharp angles and soft curves that work together to create her ethereal beauty. I am enraptured by the gorgeous woman before me.

Without conscious thought, my other hand drifts up her inner thigh. With a feather-light touch, I drag some of her fresh blood towards her center with my fingertips.

Ilya sucks air in through flared nostrils but appears otherwise unaffected as she stares at me. It isn’t until I reach the apex of her thighs that her stoicism dissolves.

I begin to mix up the blood with her arousal by rubbing circles on her clit with increasing pressure. Her hips buck, and her mouth drops open. Neither the knife, nor the torch are displaced. Almost as if they are in a separate reality from the rest of us. My movements against her swollen nub become more aggressive, as the blade absorbs more heat. The muscles beneath her soft skin shift and tense up at the same time.

“Shit! I’m about to…!” Ilya gasps, fingernails scratching against the top of the freezer.

The knife takes on a yellowish tint at the same time Ilya tosses her head back. Her gorgeous chestnut locks spill out behind her. The arm holding the lighter twitches and falls to her side. That lovely neck elongates, filling me with the urge to capture it in the palm of my hand.

She’s caught in the throws of climax, so I don’t waste a moment of time. The second the flame is gone; I take my hand from between her legs. Blood and cum coat the hand I close around her throat, stabilizing her as she experiences the incoming waves of pleasure. I have to keep her in place for what comes next.

The glowing steel sizzles as I press the tip of the blade directly over the entry point.

“Fuck!” My angel forces the word out in a choked sob.

I don’t leave it there but a moment. My actions are swift and without hesitation. The knife spins in my hand as I reach and apply the opposite side of the blade to the exit hole.

The next noise from her pink lips is a tortured groan, as the last dredges of her orgasm are overcome by the branding of her skin.

The cauterizing is done, and the wound is sealed with Rambo-esque flare. This rigged solution to our problem isn’t a pretty one, nor is it advisable. But it suits our reckless nature. And it sates the greedy, masochistic monsters we carry inside of us.

Desire runs through my bloodstream like liquid fire. It sears my insides like the blade seared her skin, hot enough to cauterize any internal wounds and emotional damage that has plagued each of us for a decade or more.

I drop the treacherous weapon and pull Ilya’s mouth up to mine. Her open mouth accepts my consuming kiss. I’m able to swallow her anguished cry before she’s even finished with the sound.

She grabs onto me like she’s drowning, nails sinking into my skin, clinging on to the solid breadth of my shoulders.

Even her kiss turns vicious, teeth tearing and bruising with intention. I recognize her subtle ways to release the pain, and accept it all eagerly.

“Do you want me to get something to soothe the burn?” I ask as soon as my lip escapes her confinement.

“Later.” Her chest rises and falls with her heavy breathing. Soft, perfect breasts brush against mine. My nipples feel electrically charged. “Je veux juste que tu sois en moi (I just want you inside of me.)”

My mouth quirks up on one side as I regard her ravenous demeanor. She’s like a starved animal.

Releasing her throat, I wrap an arm around her waist. A perfect bloody handprint is left behind for me to appreciate.

Those spread thighs serve as an ideal slot for my hips to fit into. Especially with her sitting up on the edge of the freezer and me standing in front of her.

I reach for the gun, noting the copious amount of milky, viscous fluid that still coats the suppressor.

Damn, we are messy. Everything about us is. Right now, my bare torso is streaked with Ilyasviel’s blood. Not to mention the remnants of my own, leaking from the stab in my chest.

Wherever I touch her, I’m smearing a heady combination of her life essence and her sweet release.

Plus we’re fucking on top of her cousin’s temporary casket. The cousin we murdered. While our closest friends lay deceased mere meters away. Traitorous bastards.

“You’re a dirty little thing, you know that? Wanting me to stick the long, hard barrel of a murder weapon inside of that tight cunt of yours.” I chide her, dropping the bass in my voice. I’ve shifted to the deeper tone I use solely for seducing. She goes wild for it, every time. “Wanting me to fuck you in a pool of your own blood on top of Rudy’s lifeless body. All while our ex-friends' corpses serve as our voyeurs.”

Ilya licks her lips, watching mine spell out the twisted truth that is our nature.

I glide the barrel along the inside of her hurt thigh, gathering up her blood. The metal tip has already cooled from its two fired rounds. As I touch it to Ilya’s entrance, I can’t imagine it staying that way for long.

My gaze drops down between us. I watch in awe as her swollen, pink lips open up for the semi-automatic.

My love draws me close until her ragged breaths blow out against my ear.

“I love being dirty for you.” She acquiesces.

“I can be dirty for you too.” I respond. “I enjoy killing with you, and for you. I think blood is the perfect lubricant for us. I soak my briefs just thinking about you hurting me, for fucks sake. I live for the type of pain you inflict on me.”

In silence, I push the gun into her as far as her body will allow. My trigger finger has been pressed flat, along the underside of the barrel. Every nerve ending in my clit pulses with a blinding strength when I feel that finger sink inside of her as well. All the way to the first knuckle.

She’s filled with a solid 8 inches of titanium alloy, 2-3 inches of carbon steel, and another inch of my index finger inside of her. And she’s loving every fucking bit of it.

I groan aloud at the sight.

“And I’m about to cum from watching this Glock disappear inside your cunt. Does that make me as wicked as you are, little angel?”

It feels as if we are whispering secrets to each other. Confessing our sins for absolution. The funny thing is, we already know one another’s secrets. We fell madly in love with each other’s sins a long time ago.

“Yes!” She nearly screams as I begin to pump the firearm in and out of her.

This time I’m not teasing, or testing. This go-round, I start out fucking Ilya with vigorous intent.

She burrows into my shoulder with her claws and hangs on for dear life, sending flushes of heat through my entire body. My thrusts are reckless and driven by my own selfish need to see her lose control at my hand. I fuck her like the gun is attached to my hips. Using the arm around her waist to push on her lower back and tilt her hips up.

The Glock explores new depths, guiding my love up the cliff’s face and straight towards the explosive climax she yearns for.

I’m dripping wet and can’t stop myself from grinding against the handle, helping to bury the firearm deep within. I’m swollen, hard, and sensitive. The barest graze against the solid handle nearly causes me to shoot off like a rocket.

I grit my teeth, the strong line of my jaw sets, muscles working beneath my skin to keep me on the ground. Ilya kisses and licks along my jaw line. My hips roll in a frenzied grind, giving away how close I am to sharing in her pleasure.

“Fuck, Vexy. I’m such a slut for your gun.” Ilya sighs into my ear.

“Filthy slut.” I grind out between clenched teeth. The pleasure is suffocating, nearly impossible to keep at bay.

I’m taken aback when warm, wet fingers are pressed to my lips. Again I am tempted by the copper tang of blood against my mouth. Then that same hand streaks my face with the essence. A bloody hand begins to caress my breast. Slippery fingers slide around one areola.

“Wicked beast.” She calls me. “Filthy animal.” She bites into the place my neck meets my shoulder, as if showing me how much of an animal she can be too.

“Fuck, I love you.” I groan out, close to yelling the words.

Ilya stays with her teeth sunk into the twitching shoulder muscle. Her hold around my neck becomes the proper leverage to roll her hips into me at the same time mine press onto her.

That lithe body moves masterfully, to the point I’m questioning who’s fucking who. Deciding we are clearly fucking each other with wild abandon, I’m about to cum with a violence that puts our other deeds this evening to shame.

Ilya gasps, releasing my flesh from their pearly confinement. She screams a moan, so long and loud that it seems to be wrung from her very soul.

New striped are torn into my back when she drags her fingernails across my shoulder blades.

“Harder. Don’t stop. Don’t…ever…stop.” Her speech is stilted. It takes awhile to get the words out in between ragged breaths.

Her hips begin to stutter right before her orgasm hits. That’s my cue to hit the gas, so I pump into her harder and faster than before.

“Oh sh…it. Oui! Oh yes…VEX!” She screams out, both her head and eyes rolling back.

My hand slides up to grab her by her hair and hold her close. Then I duck forward and clamp my own teeth around her exposed throat, forcing another ecstatic cry from it.

I’m thrown headlong into my orgasm. Upon impact, I shatter into a million dazzling pieces.

“Mon ange.” I moan my worship for her against her silken skin.

Our ragged breathing is all that separates us from perfect silence. We shudder and cling to each other while the aftershocks batter us around.

Ilya’s arms eventually drop to my waist. I withdraw the firearm with a careful precision. I have to peel my fingers off one by one, so tight was my grip upon it. After engaging the safety, I set it gingerly beside her.

I know right? Oh, now you engage the safety. Well yeah, we don’t want any possible accidents happening, do we? Especially if they serve no higher purpose.

Ilya looks up at me through her lashes. She is a picture of satisfaction, basking in the afterglow while ruffling her sex hair.

At least, from the face up. From the neck down, we both look like cannibals.

“You are everything.” I tell her in earnest.

Ilya’s response manages to do the one thing that all of my enemies have failed at. It catches me off guard. After everything that’s happened this evening, her words manage to instill actual fear in me. More so than having a gun aimed at my heart, more nervous than the possibility of dying.

And I love her even more for being able to evoke an emotion and reaction that no one else can. I may be terrified, but I would choose to live with her terror every day, if my option is to be completely content but not have her there.

Ilya looks me right into my eyes, and uses her no-nonsense voice.

“Then ask me to marry you, so I can say yes.”

I gape at her like a fish on land for a good few seconds.

She rolls her eyes. “Now, belle idiote (you beautiful idiot.) I felt the box in your pocket earlier.”

“But, I was thinking of maybe doing it on your birthday…” I admit.

“Baby, we just killed out two best friends. I don’t think my birthday is going to be as fun as we had all originally planned. Hell, we’ll probably still be scrubbing blood out of the floor by my birthday.”

I do look around us at the carnage we have created.

It’s so…us.

I sigh. “I’ll call my father for clean up.”

Even as I say those words, I’m getting down on one knee. And yes, that means I’m kneeling in a pool of blood and vodka, while fishing out the ring I’ve carried around with me for a month.

Ilya sits up straighter, legs hanging over the side and hands now planted on either side of her hips. She gazes down on me with an array of emotions all jumbled into one on her face. She chews at her bottom lip while I take a deep breath.

“Ilyasviel Cadieux…” I start, popping open the little box.

The ring is custom made, two crafted golden guns on either side of a huge diamond, with smaller emeralds on either side of the guns.

The way her eyes light up is a brand new expression, and it was one I’ve been waiting for for an eternity. It takes my words away, robs me of oxygen and rational thoughts.

It's not until those tear-filled hazel orbs flick back up to meet mine, that I remember I’m supposed to say things. Words. I’m supposed to ask a question.

“Ilya, my angel. We are bloody hurricanes of destruction. It’s going to land us in the lowest circles of hell, I have no doubt. But while we’re still topside, I want us to continue burning the world down, side by side. I’m asking you to promise that you will continue to bring me back from the brink of death until we can storm the underworld together. I’m promising to forever do the same. And now I’m on my knees begging you, Ilyasviel…will you marry me?”

Not going to lie, I kind of have to choke out that last part. I’ve never been so caught up in pure love for any one person before, and I thought I had experienced it all with her. But this is a new level. For me, and for us.

Ilya leans so far over the edge of the freezer I fear she may fall. She stares at me with an intensity that raises the fine hairs all over my body.

“Your last breath will be mine. And I promise you forever after that. Yes, Evexella. Yes.”

I dare say we light up with smiles bright enough to rival the noon sun.

I rise up and place the ring on her finger, watching a few tears fall onto the back of her hand. Then I wrap my arms around her,and crush her against me in an unrelenting bear hug while she weeps on my shoulder.

After she’s gotten all of her happy tears out, I place the sweetest kiss on her lips.

“This was a perfect proposal.” She tells me, forehead resting against mine.

I agree completely. For us, I shouldn’t have ever expected anything different.

Out loud though, I voice my only concern.

“We’re going to have to make up a slightly different story to tell our future children when they inevitably ask. Something a little less…murdery, perhaps?”

The End.